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CAIRO

STANLEY LANE-POOLE

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CAIRO

SKETCHES OF ITS

HISTORY, MONUMENTS, AND SOCIAL LIFE

BY

STANLEY LANE-POOLE

HON. MEMBER OF THE EGYPTIAN COMMISSION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE MONUMENTS OF ARAB ART

AUTHOR OF "THE ART OF THE SARACENS IN EGYPT," "STUDIES IN A MOSQUE," "THE MOORS IN SPAIN," "THE BARBARY CORSAIRS," "THE LIFE OF VISCOUNT STRATFORD DE REDCLIFFE, K.G.," "THE LIFE OF SIR HARRY PARKES," ETC.

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With Numerous Illustrations on Wood

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PREFACE.

CAIRO is one of the most interesting cities in the world. Artists never weary of trying to reproduce its picturesque scenes and crumbling ruins. Travellers of the least impressionable nature are not proof against the fascination of its quaint Oriental life, and find themselves realising the dreams of the *Arabian Nights* of their childhood. Every step in the old quarters of the Mohammedan city tells a story of the famous past. The stout remnant of a fortified wall, a dilapidated mosque, a carved door, a Kufic text—each has its history, which carries us back to the days when Saladin went forth from the gates of Cairo to meet Richard in the plain of Acre, or when Beybars rode at the head of his Mamlûks in the charge which trampled upon the Crusaders of St. Louis. A cloistered court recalls the ungodly memory of the prophet of the Druses; a spacious quadrangle, closely filled by picturesque, albeit scowling, groups of students, reminds us of the conquering Khalifs of 'Aly's heretical line, who, disdaining the mere dominion of Roman "Africa," carried their triumphant arms into Egypt and Syria, Sicily and Sardinia, whilst their fleets disputed the command of the Mediterranean with the galleys of Moorish Spain.

A hundred associations such as these are wrapped about the ruins of mediæval Cairo; but they speak to very few of the thousands of Englishmen who, winter after winter, flock to the City of the Mamlûks. One reason of this is that there is no systematic historical description of Cairo, such as has been written of many a less interesting capital. There are the guide-books, of course, sometimes accurate and elaborate, for which everyone is grateful, but which no one reads continuously or for mere pleasure. There are books about the present people of Cairo, but little is said of their ancestors. My great-uncle, Lane, in his *Modern Egyptians*, left out the historical aspect of his subject, and confined himself to the manners and customs of every-day life of the Muslims of his time. That he possessed the necessary

information for the part he omitted is shown by the historical notes he supplied for my grandmother's *Englishwoman in Egypt*—a book now almost forgotten, but which conveys in an unstudied, conversational manner a close and faithful picture of the Cairo and the Cairenes of fifty years ago.* A really exhaustive history of the mediaeval capital of Egypt would be a work of wide and perhaps unsuspected interest, and I have for some years been collecting materials for the purpose. Such a work, however, would address itself chiefly to the special student, and would probably be somewhat over-elaborate for the general reader.

For such as wish to prepare their minds to appreciate the historical bearing of the monuments and daily scenes of the Cairo they are about to visit, the present volume may serve as an introduction. It does not pretend to be exhaustive, but merely attempts to give a general view of the historical, archaeological, and social aspects of mediaeval and modern Cairo. Much of it is based upon personal observation, and the rest is drawn from authoritative sources. The main subject is Cairo and its Mohammedan inhabitants, past and present ; but in treating of the city, it was impossible to overlook the country-folk who flock into its streets, bearing the produce of the fields; and in describing the exquisite achievements of Saracenic Art, it would have been ungracious to ignore the superb artistic work of the Copts, who taught the Arabs so much, and received so little attention from modern writers until Mr. Butler wrote his admirable work on their churches. Nor was it possible to shut our eyes to the huge monuments of the earliest civilisation in the world, which fringe the horizon as one looks forth from the ramparts of Saladin's Citadel, and remind us how the years of mediaeval Cairo are but as days in the sight of the Pyramids. Saladin becomes almost a contemporary hero when we look over his battlements at the mighty tomb of Cheops. But the desolation of Memphis and the vestiges of the Christian period are only incidental to my purpose.

The signal success of the English administration of Egypt during the last fifteen years has called for a supplementary chapter, in which the admirable results of British influence, exerted by Lord Cromer and an able executive staff, are set forth for the information of those who do not make a systematic study of the parliamentary blue-books.

* An account of the foundation and topography of mediaeval Cairo, and of its general aspect and monuments in the first half of this century, was actually written by Mr. Lane, but was not published until I edited it in 1896, with the title of *Cairo Fifty Years Ago*, by Edward William Lane (John Murray).

Since this chapter was written a fresh step has been taken by the English representative in Egypt which demands special notice in this volume. I do not refer to the gradual reconquest of the Sūdān, however important that may prove to the future safety and prosperity of Egypt and the reopening of ancient trade routes; but to a matter which closely affects the future safety of the architectural monuments of Cairo. During my visit to Egypt in the summer of 1895, Lord Cromer did me the honour to consult me on the steps which should be taken to assist the work of the Commission for the Preservation of the Monuments of Arab Art, the powers and objects of which are described in Chapter IV. (pp. 104-6, 118). The Report which I presented was published in the annual blue-book on the progress of Egypt for 1896, and the results of Lord Cromer's subsequent negotiations are thus summarised in the *Athenæum* of April 4th, 1896:—

"A quarter of Lord Cromer's annual blue-book on the affairs of Egypt is filled with matters affecting art and archaeology. Hitherto finance, irrigation, law reform, and other practical subjects have necessarily occupied almost the whole of these Reports, and the large space now devoted to the monuments is a very hopeful sign. A considerable part of the blue-book is occupied with the subject of the preservation of the Arab monuments, on which Mr. Stanley Lane-Poole addressed to Lord Cromer, at his request, a comprehensive Report last year. Lord Cromer appears to have adopted all Mr. Lane-Poole's recommendations, and in order to enable them to be carried into effect, he has extracted the sum of £20,000 from the Caisse de la Dette for the use of the Commission for the Preservation of the Monuments. Hitherto this invaluable Commission has been starved for want of funds, understaffed, and unable to do half the work which it knows to be necessary. Lord Cromer not only heartily commends the work so far done under great disadvantages, and pays a high tribute to that excellent architect Herz Bey,* but has arranged a contribution of £1,000 a-year from the Egyptian Government for the purpose of increasing the staff, and strongly recommends an increase in the annual average grant of £4,000 for repairs and preservation. . . . He has induced the Patriarch to place the Coptic monuments under the Commission, so that there will be but one authority watching over all the [mediaeval] monuments; and the Patriarch has

* Herz Bey has since published a Catalogue of the Arab Museum (described in Chapter IV. of this work) in French and in English (*Catalogue of the National Museum of Arab Art*, by Max Herz Bey, edited by S. Lane-Poole, Quaritch, 1896).

entered into an engagement that no work of restoration shall be undertaken without the consent of the Commission."

In consequence of Lord Cromer's powerful mediation, for which archaeologists cannot be too grateful, the Commission is now placed upon a proper footing. Two able young architects have been appointed to assist the architect-in-chief, and the work of preserving and restoring the monuments is being pressed forward with equal energy and technical skill. The exquisite mosques which make so much of the beauty and picturesqueness of Cairo, and tell so much of its history, have now a better prospect than ever before of being preserved for the delight of generations to come.

In the prefaces to former editions, due acknowledgment was made to the various publishers and editors who have kindly permitted me to reprint such portions of the following pages as had already been published in a scattered form. I have only to add the hope that travellers and lovers of Eastern Art will find the book helpful in the study of the monuments and history of mediaeval Egypt, and the manners and character of the Mohammedan people, both as they now are and as they were in the days of Saladin.

S. L.-P.

Athenæum Club,
November, 1897.

CONTENTS

PAGE

PREFACE vii

PLAN OF CAIRO xv

CHAPTER I.

KAHIRA THE GUARDED 1

Cairo, the city of the Arabian Nights, 1, 2; the Jewish physician's eulogy, 4; its growth, 4-6; size, 6; its three walls, 6-7; present remains, 6-7; topography, 8, 9; private houses, 10; bazars and shops, 12; Citadel, 15, 18; quarter of Ibn-Tûlûn, 20-4; the canal, 24, 26; rise of the Nile and cutting of the dam of the canal, 27-32.

CHAPTER II.

THE MOSQUES OF CAIRO 33

The mosques in the High Street, 33; Mamlûk period of mosque-building, 34; the Mâristân of Kalaûn, 34; Mosques of El-Ashraf, El-Ghûry, El-Muayyad, and Sultan Hasan, 36; Hasaneyn, 38; Eastern Cemetery or Tombs of the Khalifs, 38; general description of a mosque, 38-43; Mosque of 'Amr, 44-48; of El-Hâkim, 48-50; of Sultan Hasan, 50-3; of Kâït Bey, 53-6; decoration of mosques, 56-60; stained windows and lamps, 60-1.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAMLÛKS 62

The Khalifs' governors, 62; Ahmad ibn Tûlûn, 62-4; Khumâraweyh, 64-5; dynasty of Ikhshîd, 65; the Fâtimy Khalifs, 65-6; Saladin, 66-8; El-Kâmil, 68; the two dynasties of Mamlûks, 68; origin of the name, 68; their rise to power, Sheger-ed-durr and Aybek, 70; external history and embassies, 70; art, 70, 72; Mamlûks and peasantry distinct classes,

PAGE

72; Tartar blood, 72; Mamlûk amirs or lords, 73; bodyguard, 73; struggles for the succession, 73; En-Nâsir, Ketbughâ, and reign of Lâgîn, 75-82; Mamlûk titles, 76; a Mamlûk sultan's duties, judgeship, correspondence, 83-8; officers of the court, 88-9; state progress, 89-90; camp, 90; sport, falconry, archery, polo, 92; society, 92; superstitions, 93; drinking revels, 94-5.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MUSEUM OF ARAB ART 98

The Saracenic style in art, 98-102; decay of the monuments, 102-4; the Commission for the Preservation of the Monuments of Arab Art, 104-6; the Museum, 106; inlaid tables, or *kursis*, 107-10; carved niches from mosques, 110; inlaid panelled doors, 110-2; enamelled lamps, 112-4; Saracenic art at the South Kensington Museum, 114-8; and at the British Museum, 118.

CHAPTER V.

THE CAIRENE 119

Upper classes Europeanised, 119; lower classes conservative and unchanged, 119; the Cairo shopkeeper, 120; his shop, 120; way of conducting business, 120-2; refreshments offered, 120; the passing scene, 123; bargaining, 123-4; the shopkeeper's home, 124; in a private street, 124; meshrebiya windows, 126, 128; entrance to the private house, 129; door, 129; lock and key, 130; the courtyard, 130; men's rooms, 130; guest-room, 132; its construction and furniture, 132; the harim or women's apartments, 133; kâ'a or drawing-room, 134; bedrooms, 134; bathroom, 134; private life of the master, 134-7; and of the women, 137-140; polygamy rare in Cairo, 137; divorce frequent, 137; want of education among women, 140; feminine beauty, 142; ideal of the poets, 142-4; Greek girls, 144; women despised by Mohammed and Mohammedans, 145; the Devil's opinion, 145; the position of women a fatal blot on the Mohammedan social system, 146; pernicious bringing up of girls, 146; want of women's influence in Eastern life, 147; no remedy whilst modern Islâm prevails, 147-8.

CHAPTER VI.

THE REVELS OF ISLAM 149

A Cairo dinner, 149; mode of eating, 149-52; Arab dishes, 152; revels of the "Golden Prime," wine, perfume, prodigious banquets, music, wit,

PAGE

153-4; love of poetry and song, 154-9; Hammâd, Ibrahîm El-Môsily, Mukhârik, 155-9; the 'Almas, dancing girls, clowns, 159-60; Egyptian weddings, 160-7; religious festivals, 167-178; the Moharram Festival, 167-8; Persian Passion Play, 168; return of the pilgrims, 168; Feast of the Prophet, 170; Feast of the Hasaneyn, 172-5; Procession of the Holy Carpet or Kiswa, 176-7; various festivals, 175-9.

CHAPTER VII.

EDUCATION AND RELIGION 180

Educational standard generally low, 180; chiefly theological studies, 180; training of Egyptian children, 180-3; manners carefully cultivated, 182; parental influence, 182; religious training, 183-8; schools, 183; Korân taught by rote, 183; the schoolmaster, 184; the Azhar University, 184-8; European reform of education in Egypt, 188-90; statistics, 189; education of women, 146-8; the religion of Islâm, its theism, and apostolic doctrine, 190-1; prayers, Friday service, fast of Ramadân, 195-200; religious performances, zikrs and khâtmas, 200-1.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTIAN BABYLON 202

The Christian domination in Egypt, 202-3; Europe's debt to the Egyptian monks, 203; the Coptic Church, 204-5; Copts the scriveners and accountants of Egypt, 205; they represent most closely the ancient Egyptians in feature and language, 205-6; character of the Copts, 206-7; their history little known, 208; Coptic monasteries, 209-10; Babylon signifies Gate of On or Heliopolis, 212; Heliopolis, 212-14; the Virgin's Tree, 213; the fortress of Babylon, 214; Coptic churches within the fortress, 216-20; plan, furniture, decoration, and vessels of a Coptic church, 216-9; church of Abu-Sarga, 219; church of St. Barbara and the Mu'allaka, 219-20.

CHAPTER IX.

MEMPHIS 221

Antiquity of the Egyptian civilisation, 221-2; Menes founds Memphis, 223; mediæval vandalism, 224; the Red Pyramid, 226; Rhodôpis, 226; a pyramid is a royal cairn, 221; necropolis of Memphis and Sakkara, 229; pictured tombs, 229; Serapeum, 230; the bull Apis, 230; his burial-place, 230-2.

CHAPTER X.

PAGE

THE FELLÂHÎN 233

Egypt essentially an agricultural country, 233; fertility, 233-4; cheap farming, 233: annual inundation of the Nile, 234; irrigation, 234-43; *corvée*, or forced labour, 236; native pumps, shadûfs, sâkiyas, 238-40; reforms under English administration, 240-4; abolition of the corvée and courbash, 241-2; taxation, 242; Sir C. Scott Moncrieff's irrigation works, 242, and roads, 243; peasantry form the bulk of the population, 244; meaning of the word *felláhin*, 244; advantages of the Egyptian cultivator, 244-6; character of the fellâh, 246; villages, 247-52; local saints and their miracles, 252-6; country towns, 256-60; Minya, 256; Asyût, 258-60; Girga, 260; Abydos, 262; myth of Osiris and Isis, 264-5; Thebes, 265-73; a country law-court, 273; Coptic clerks, 273-4; industries, 275; life of the artisan, 276; meals, 276-8; peasant women, 279-81; amusements, 281.

CHAPTER XI.

ENGLAND'S WORK IN EGYPT 282

Modern innovations, 282-8; reforms of the ex-Khedive Isma'îl, 289-90; debt, 290; English administration, 292-4; state of Egypt in 1882, 294-6; contrast in 1892 under English influence, 297-8; advantage of Indian experience, 298; conclusion, 300-2.

CHAPTER XII.

MEDIÆVAL SILVERWORK 303

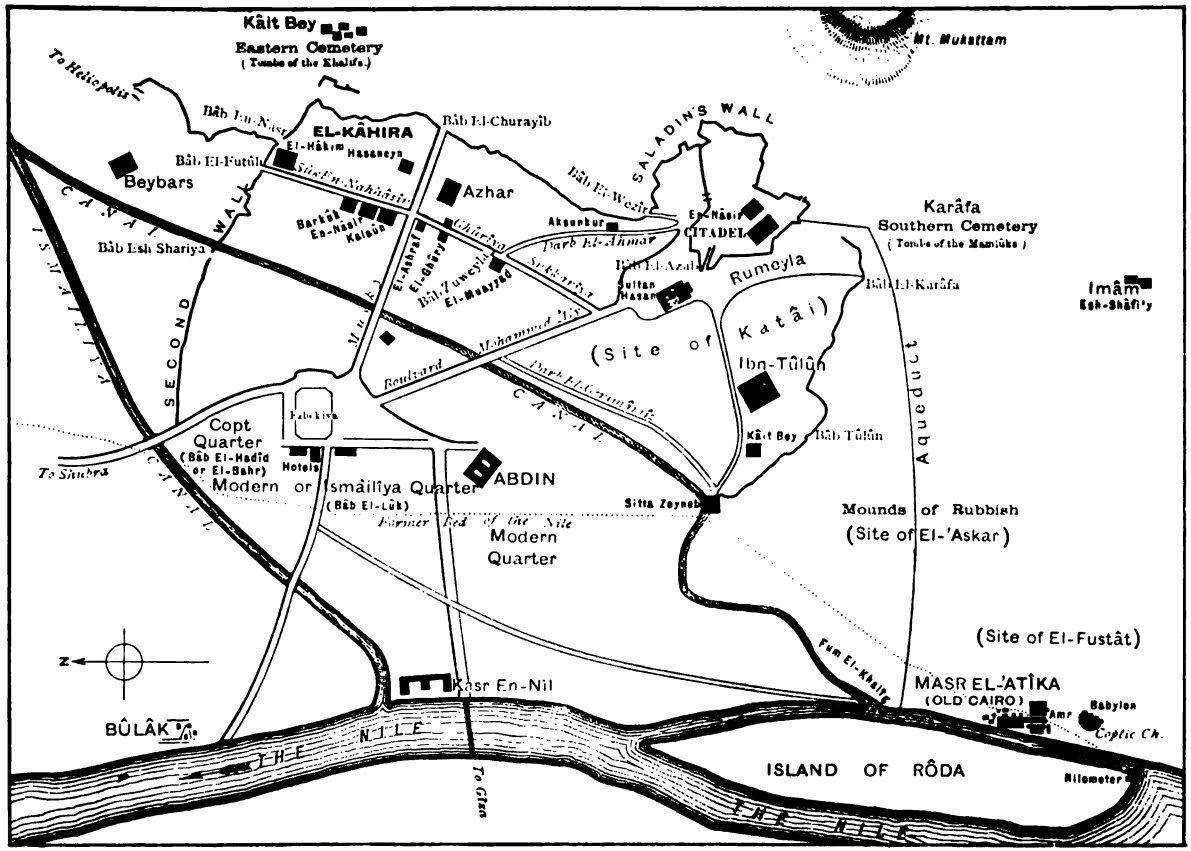
A Mamlûk nobleman, 303; Mamlûk furniture, 304; Beysary's perfume-burner, 305-6; Môsil smiths, 307; Fâtimy art, 307-8; characteristics of Môsil silver inlay, 309-10; Cairo silversmiths, 312-13; En-Nâsir, a patron of art, 314-15; repoussé work of the fifteenth century, 316; Venetian school of Azzimine, 317.

NOTE ON THE MOSQUE OF 'AMR 318

THE SARACEN RULERS OF EGYPT AND THEIR MONUMENTS . . 320

THE PRINCIPAL MOSQUES OF CAIRO 324

INDEX 325



PLAN OF MEDIAEVAL CAIRO TO ILLUSTRATE THE POSITIONS OF THE MOSQUES.

CAIRO

CHAPTER I

KAHIRA THE GUARDED

When Edward Lane sailed from England for Egypt in the summer of 1825, two months elapsed before he came in sight of a "tall distant sail," which proved to be the well-known Pillar of Pompeius the Prefect at Alexandria. Two generations have passed since then, and a visit to Egypt is now an ordinary Christmas holiday. People go to Cairo as they used to go to take the waters at Bath or Tunbridge, and the cataracts at Aswân are almost as familiar as Sandford Lasher. Nor is it any wonder that Egypt every year draws larger crowds of visitors to the banks of her broad river. No country has more to offer to the wearied Londoner; nowhere is life more restful than on the bosom of the Nile, among the palms and temples of Luxor, or in Philae's enchanted isle. The whole atmosphere breathes tranquil contentment. It is not merely the quest of the sun that takes us to Egypt: the total change of scene, of ideas, of manners, attracts us. We are glad to shake off our stereotyped habits and conventions, or at least to see how others can do without them; and this it is, as much as its picturesque confusion and its romantic associations, which lends Cairo its imperishable charm.

For Cairo is still to a great degree the city of the Arabian

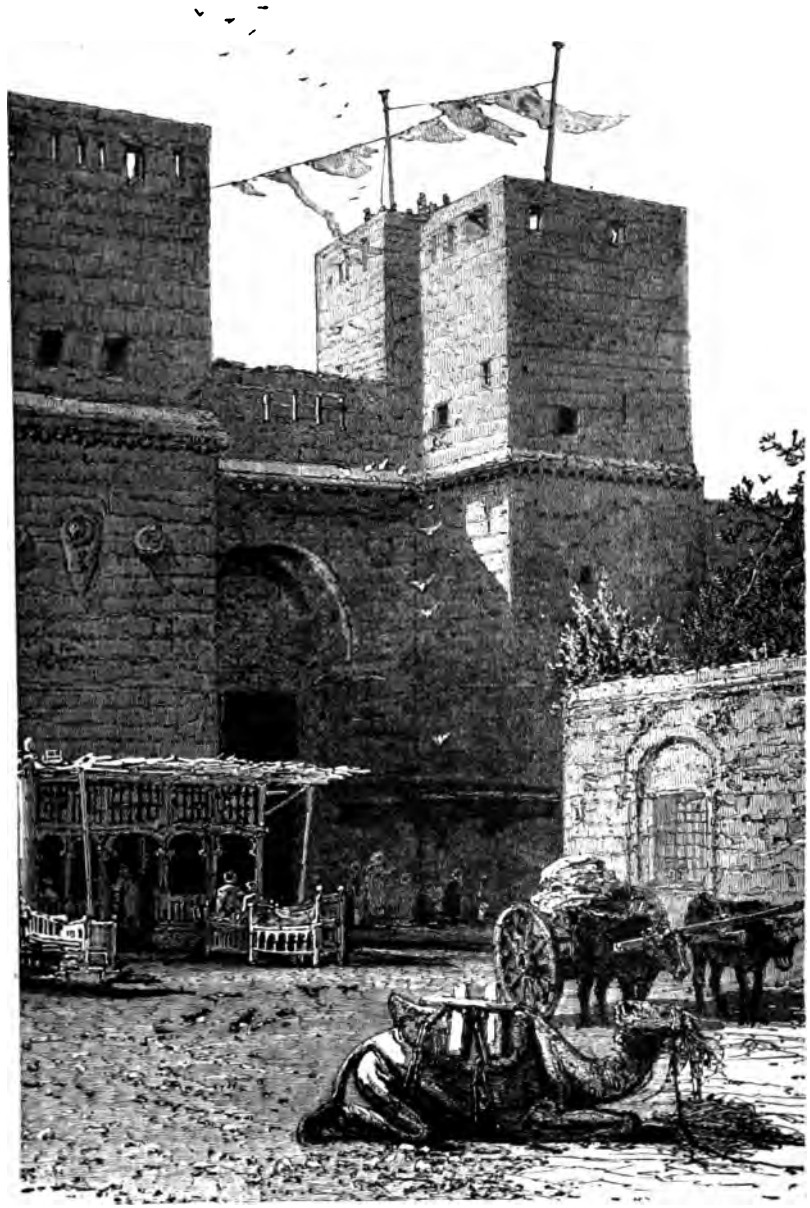
Nights. We can still shut our eyes to the hotels and restaurants, the dusty grass-plots and villas of the European quarter, and turn away to wander in the labyrinth of narrow lanes which intersect the old parts of the city, just as they did in the days of the Mamlûk Sultans. And as we thread the winding alleys, where a thin streak of sky marks the narrow space between the lattice-windows of the overhanging stories, and dive under a camel here, or retreat into a narrow recess there, to escape destruction under the feet of the apparently impassable crowd of beasts of burden, we may fancy ourselves in the gateway of 'Aly of Cairo, and in that stall round the corner we may perhaps find the immortal Barber himself and hear his story of the wonderful adventures of the Six Brothers; within the grated lattice over the way, the Three Royal Mendicants may at this moment be entertaining the Portress and her fair sisters with the history of their calamities; and if we wait till night we may see the good Harûn Er-Rashîd himself (newly arrived from Baghdâd) stealthily pursuing his midnight rambles, with Ja'far at his heels, and black Mesrûr clearing the way. That old man sitting in his cupboard of a shop may be able to exchange "new lamps for old" in the manner of 'Aladdin's Moorish sorcerer. A few streets away from the European quarter it is easy to dream that we are acting a part in the veracious histories of the Thousand and One Nights—which do, in fact, describe Cairo and its people as they were in the fourteenth century. In its very dilapidation the city helps the illusion. Its ruined houses, which no one thinks of repairing, are full of the superstitious sentiment of the East; naturally they are haunted by 'Efrîts and other mischievous Jinn, who frighten away God-fearing tenants. Its mediaeval monuments transport one to the golden age of Arabian art and culture. Among its mosques and the fragments of its palaces are the noblest examples of Saracenic architecture that can be seen in all the wide empire of Islâm. Damascus and Baghdâd, Delhi and Gaur, Seville and Cordova, possess elements of beauty that Cairo has not, and serve to complete the history of Arabian art; but to see that art in its perfection, uncorrupted by the mechanical detail of the

A LAMP-SELLER.

Alhambra, free from the distorted outlines of India, we must study the mosques and tombs of Cairo — the beautiful city extolled throughout Arabian literature, insomuch that the Jewish physician, in the Story of the Humpback, protests that, "he who hath not seen Cairo, hath not seen the world. Her soil is gold; her Nile is a marvel; her women are as the damsels of paradise; her houses are palaces; and her air is soft, sweet-smelling as aloes-wood, refreshing the heart—and how can Cairo be otherwise, when she is the Mother of the World?"

The capital of Egypt has grown up on several foundations, and by the incorporation of various suburbs. It owes its origin to the Arabs, whose general, 'Amr ibn El-Âsy, after conquering the country, A.D. 641, fixed the site of his capital where he first pitched his tent; and hence it was called Fustât, "the Tent." Here the governors, whom the Khalifs of Damascus set over the land of Egypt, held their court; and even when it was no longer the actual seat of government it remained the chief town. A century later (A.D. 751), the representatives of the 'Abbâsy Khalifs —a new line who had wrested the empire from the earlier house of Omayya—removed their residence to a site a little to the north-east of Fustât, where a military suburb called El-'Askar ("the Camp") grew up, and formed a sort of Cairene Versailles. The first independent Mohammedan sovereign, Ahmad ibn-Tûlûn (A.D. 870), again changed the seat of government, and founded the new suburb, Katâi' ("the Wards"), further to the north-east, where he and his successors, and the latter dynasty of Ikhshîd, kept their state. When Gauhar took Egypt from the latter for his master, the Fâtimy Khalif of Tunis, he chose a fourth site, again to the north-east of Katâi', and founded there, in 969, a new city, to which he gave the proud title of El-Kâhira, or "the Victorious," which Italians corrupted into Cairo, and which the inhabitants call Masr.

Gauhar's design, however, was not to found a new city, but to build a palace for his master, the Fâtimy Khalif, El-Mo'izz; and for a long time Kâhira was simply the Khalif's fortress, and



THE GATE OF VICTORY (BÂB EN-NASR).

was dwelt in only by his harîm, his slaves, his officials, and his garrison. The double palace was enclosed within fortified walls and moats; the greater or eastern wing was the Khalif's own residence, and here he kept his women, children, and eunuchs, to the number, it is said, of 12,000 souls. Near by was the imperial mausoleum, where he deposited the remains of his ancestors, which he brought with him from their graves in Tunis. Further south was his own mosque, the Azhar ("Most Splendid"), where, as Prince and Precentor of the Faithful, he led the Friday prayers. The smaller western palace was separated from the eastern by the street called Beyn El-Kasreyn ("Between the Palaces"), now known as the Sûk En-Nahhâsîn or Coppersmiths' Market, under which a passage connected the two. Nobody was allowed within the palaces, besides the Khalif's household, but the high officials and the garrison. Even Ambassadors were compelled to dismount outside, and allow themselves to be led into the presence. It was not till Saladin succeeded to the throne of the Fâtimis, and enlarged the walls, that Kâhira became a city instead of a palace.

There have been three successive walls, or enlargements of walls, since the foundation of Kâhira. First Gauhar threw a brick wall round his original palace, the nucleus of the city. A century later (A.D. 1087) Bedr El-Gemâly, the general and grand vizîr of the Fâtimy Khalif El-Mustansir, enlarged this first wall so as to include some additional space to the north and south, and built or rebuilt some of its sixty gates. When Saladin succeeded to the Fâtimy power in the twelfth century, he built the Citadel on a spur of Mount Mukattam, and enlarged the Fâtimy walls so as to include his new castle as well as Katâi' in their circuit. The city had now expanded from the square mile or so of the old Fâtimy fortress to the size of the Cairo of to-day, excluding the European quarter—that is, about three miles long and a mile to a mile and a half wide.

Most of these changes can be traced in the present city. A small part of Fustât remains under the name of Masr El-'Atîka (Old Cairo), separated from the capital by the great mounds of

rubbish which indicate vanished suburbs. Katâi' was partly burnt and partly neglected, and little of it remains but the mosque of its founder, Ahmad ibn-Tûlûn. Of Kâhira the whole growth can readily be traced. The second wall still stands on the north side, though the magnificent Norman-looking gateway of the Bâb En-Nasr, or "Gate of Victory," with its mighty square towers and fine vaulting within, and the Bâb El-Futûh, or "Gate of Conquests," flanked with massive round towers, are not quite on their original sites. The cornice and frieze, adorned with fine Kufic inscriptions, which run along the face of the gateway and the faces and inner sides of the two towers, half-way from the ground, no less than its solid and clean-cut masonry, distinguish the Gate of Victory among Saracenic monuments. The second wall is still visible on the eastern boundary of the city, and its other sides may be traced by the names of demolished gates, as the Watergate (Bâb El-Bahr), the Bâb El-Lûk, and the Bâb El-Khalak; while the Bâb Zuweyla, still standing in the heart of the city, is one of the most striking buildings in Cairo, though its walls and inscriptions are daubed over with plaster, and its towers were lowered to make room for the minarets of the adjoining mosque of El-Muayyad. This second wall, thus mapped out, must have run from near the present bridge over the Isma'îlîya Canal, along the western side of the Ezbekîya (where the wall was standing in 1842), to near the Abdîn Palace, where it turned up to the Bâb Zuweyla, and was prolonged to the eastern wall. Since it was built the Nile has considerably changed its course, and now runs much further to the westward. Saladin's wall was a restoration of this in part, but his addition (begun in 1170) round the Citadel is in partial preservation, like the fortress itself, though the continuation round the site of Katâi' on the south is demolished. The names of the gates, however, show that the limits of the present city on the south are nearly what they were in Saladin's day, and this wall must have run from the citadel to near the mosque of Ibn-Tûlûn, enclosed it, and turned north to meet the old wall near the Bâb El-Lûk.

The limits of the modern additions are only too plain, but the

street improvements of the reigning dynasty happily do not extend to the old Fâtimy quarter, and indeed scarcely affect Saladin's city except in the prolongation and widening of the Musky, the opening of the broad Boulevard Mohammed 'Aly up to the Citadel, and the laying-out of the Rumeyla and the Karâ-Meydân in the usual European style. With these exceptions, the modern additions extend only from the Ezbekîya to the river, and consist of a number of parallel boulevards and *rondes places*, where ugly western uniformity is partly redeemed by some cool verandahed villas and the grateful shade of trees.*

To understand the topography of the old Arab city, which lies to the east of the canal on the side furthest from the Nile, we must imagine a white ensign with the red St. George's cross dividing it into four quarters. The rectangular oblong forming the flag represents the old part of Cairo, between the canal and the eastern wall. It is not set square to the cardinal points of the compass, but midway between them. The horizontal line of the St. George's cross is the old High Street of Cairo, and runs from the Gate of Conquests in the north wall in a south-westerly direction till it joins the new-fangled Boulevard Mohammed 'Aly, almost in front of the Citadel. It is called in various parts of its course by different names—first the Sûk En-Nahhâsin, or Coppersmith's Market; then the Ghûrîya, or Street of Sultan El-Ghûry; then the Sukkarîya, or Sugar Bazar, and so on. The vertical line of the cross is formed by the Musky, so called after its builder, the Emîr Musik, a kinsman of Saladin's. The Musky starts from the Ezbekîya, in the European quarter, and, crossing the canal, cuts the High Street in two and goes out through the east wall at the Bâb El-Ghurayib. Around these two main thoroughfares are grouped the endless byways and *culs-de-sac* in which the Muslim population chiefly resides, and the wilderness of bazars and streets of shops where most of the business of the city is transacted.

As we turn into one of the narrow lanes that intersect the Mohammedan city, we are struck, not only by the vivid incon-

* See my *Egypt* (1880), pp. 36-43.

gruities of the street scenes which travellers have so often de-

THE EZBEKÎYA IN THE OLD DAYS.

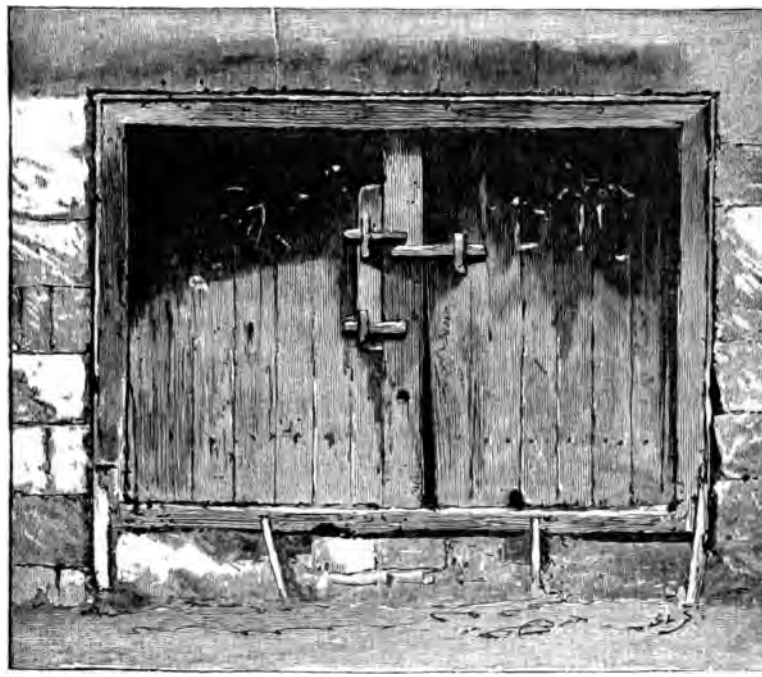
scribed, but by the contrast between the noise and bustle of the crowded alley and the quiet silence of the tall houses that overhang

it on either side. Here there is no sign of life; the doors are jealously closed, the windows shrouded by those beautiful screens of net-like woodwork which delight the artist and tempt the collector. If we enter one of these gates, through the bent passage which bars the view of the interior from the profane eyes of the passing throng, we shall find the inner court almost as silent and deserted as the guarded windows which overlook the street. We shall see nothing of the domestic life of the inhabitants; for the women's apartments are carefully shut off from the court, into which open only the guest rooms and other masculine and semi-public apartments. We cannot penetrate through the closed door which leads to the rooms of the family; we can only notice the spacious and airy appearance of the interior court. After the bustle of the street this quiet and ample space is very refreshing, and one feels that the Egyptian architects have happily realised the requirements of eastern life. They make the streets narrow and overshadow them with projecting *meshrebîyas* (lattice windows), because the sun beats down too fiercely for the wide street of European towns to be endurable. But they make the houses themselves spacious and surround them with courts and gardens, because without air the heat of the rooms would be intolerable. The Eastern architect's art lies in so constructing your house that you cannot look into your neighbour's windows, nor he into yours; and the obvious way of attaining this end is to build the rooms round a high open court, and to closely veil the windows with lattice blinds, which admit a subdued light and sufficient air, and permit an outlook without allowing the passing stranger to see through the delicately carved reticulations. The wooden screens and secluded court are necessary to fulfil the requirements of the Mohammedan system of separating the sexes.

Many private houses stand in quiet *culs-de-sac*, closed at the single entrance by a gate; but others are in frequented thoroughfares, and their ground-floors are often let out in shops which have no communication with the interior of the houses, and, as they occupy little space, encroach very inconsiderably upon the dwellings

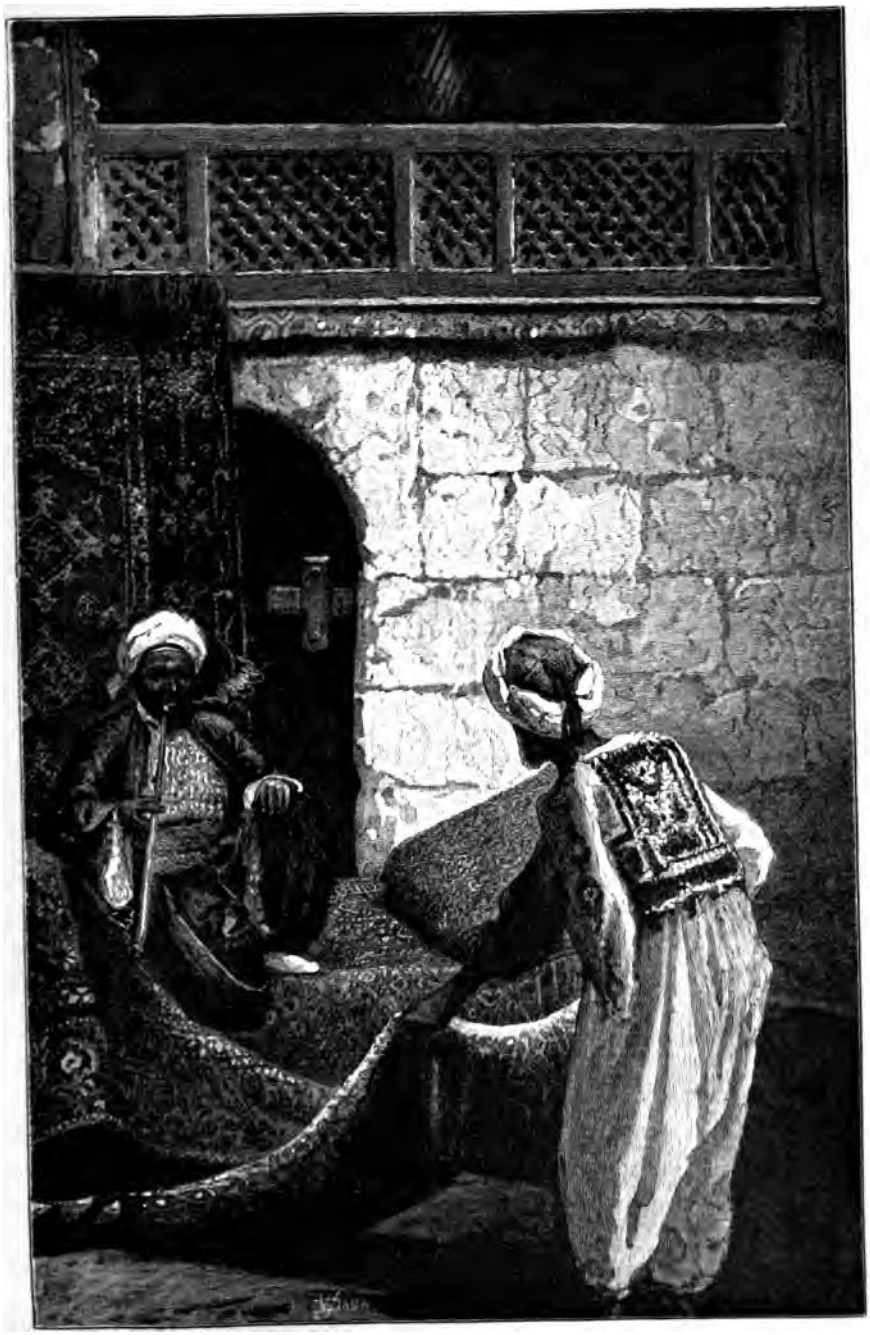
PRIVATE HOUSES.

beneath which they nestle. A recess eight feet high and six broad, with shelves for the wares, and a large stone seat in front, where the tradesman and his customers may sit and discuss a quiet pipe (or in these degenerate days an unsatisfying cigarette) over their bargaining, forms all that the average Cairene requires in the way of a shop. When the day's work is over, or if he feels inclined to go to the mosque or for a chat with a congenial ac-



A CLOSED SHOP-FRONT.

quaintance, the shopkeeper lets down the shutter that is hinged to his recess, locks it in a perfunctory manner, and departs with an easy mind. A number of these little recesses on either side of the street make up a Sûk, or bazar, over which picturesque awnings of a more or less tattered and disreputable appearance are sometimes stretched to shade the customers. The various streets and bazars used formerly to be closed by gates at night, but these



IN THE CARPET BAZAR.

have long been abolished. Sometimes the bazars enclose a large building of a couple of stories, called a Khân or Wekâla, entirely devoted to merchants and merchandise, and in several instances, as that of the Wekâla of Kâït Bey hard by the Azhar, these buildings have some pretension to beauty.

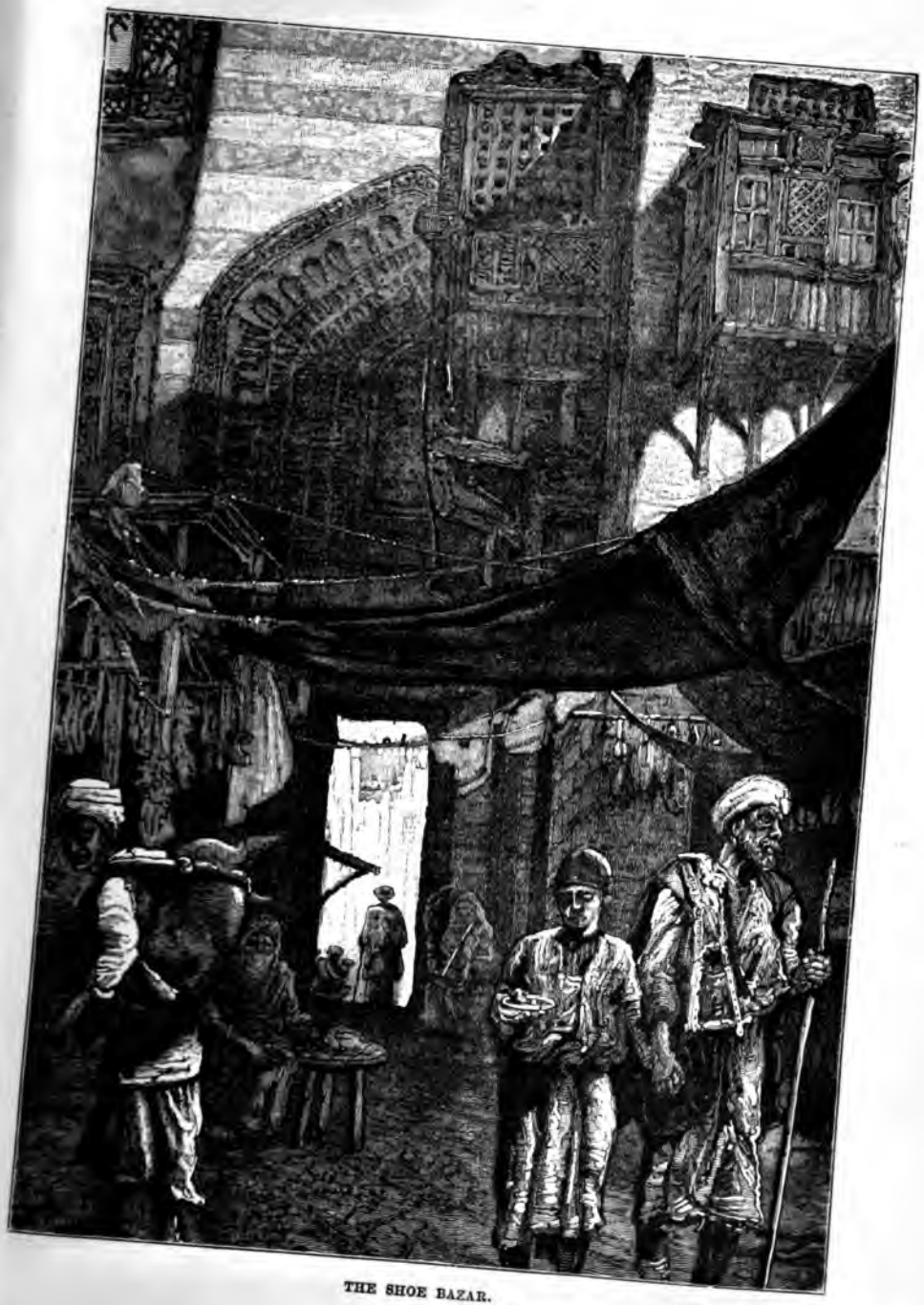
In Cairo the usual oriental plan prevails of arranging the shops according to their trades or the place whence their wares come; and if the purchaser wishes to buy several articles of different kinds he may have to go some distance. After buying boots, say, in one shop, he will pass several hundred other cobblers, and whole streets of other trades, before he arrives at the jeweller or carpet-seller he is seeking. Most of these classified streets, devoted to distinct trades, cluster round the great thoroughfares that form the cross upon the ensign—to retain our simile. The Gemalîya, where the wholesale dealers display the products of the Red Sea trade, and the great Khân El-Khalîly, a notable place for silks and carpets, are both in the dexter chief, the north-east corner of our flag. Below the horizontal line formed by the Sûk En-Nahhâsîn, where tinned and copper wares abound, side by side with pipe-sticks, amber, and the smoker's paraphernalia in general, is the Marghûsh, or cotton market; nearer the Musky is the intricate old rookery of

AN OPEN SHOP-FRONT.

the silversmiths and jewellers; and further west the quarters of the Jews, odoriferous as usual. On the southern side of the Musky, or rather of its prolongation, are the shops of the booksellers, who are learned men, and enjoy the peculiar advantage of being tied down by no fixed published price for their books; and the market for goods from the Sûdân—leopard skins, Nubian weapons, gums, ostrich eggs, feathers, and the like. After turning aside into the languorous bazar of the perfumers, and then resuming our way along the High Street, in the part where it is called the Sukkarîya, we see the sugar and candied fruits and other sweet commodities that give it its name displayed on all sides, and then suddenly find ourselves in the midst of the less tasty wares of the shoemakers, whose covered bazar, however, is quaint and picturesque; and finally pass the tentmakers' stalls before we emerge upon the Boulevard. Further towards the Citadel a street runs parallel with the Sukkarîya, known as the Market of the Armourers, Sûk Es-Sellâh. This used to be a great centre of attraction to travellers, but it is now fallen into disrepute, since the fine blades and the richly mounted arms of the old days have been mainly bought up, and European articles have taken their place. Besides all the fixed bazars, there is what may be called a running or itinerary market of water-carriers, coffee sellers, auctioneers, and hawkers of vegetables, fruits, sherbet, and all manner of goods, whose street-cries form a literature of their own.

Passing the great mosque of Sultan Hasan, we enter the Citadel between the round towers of the Bâb El-'Azab, by the narrow lane where Mohammed 'Aly laid the foundations of his dynasty in the butchery of the Mamlûks. The omniscient dragoman will point out the very spot whence the solitary survivor of the massacre leapt his horse from the battlements down to the space below; but sober history compels us to believe that the Mamlûk who survived distrusted the Pasha's invitation and never went to the Citadel at all. The fortress itself was built by Saladin as a place of residence as well as of defence. Though elevated on a spur of Mount Mukattam, it is commanded by higher positions behind; and

THE ARMOURERS' MARKET.

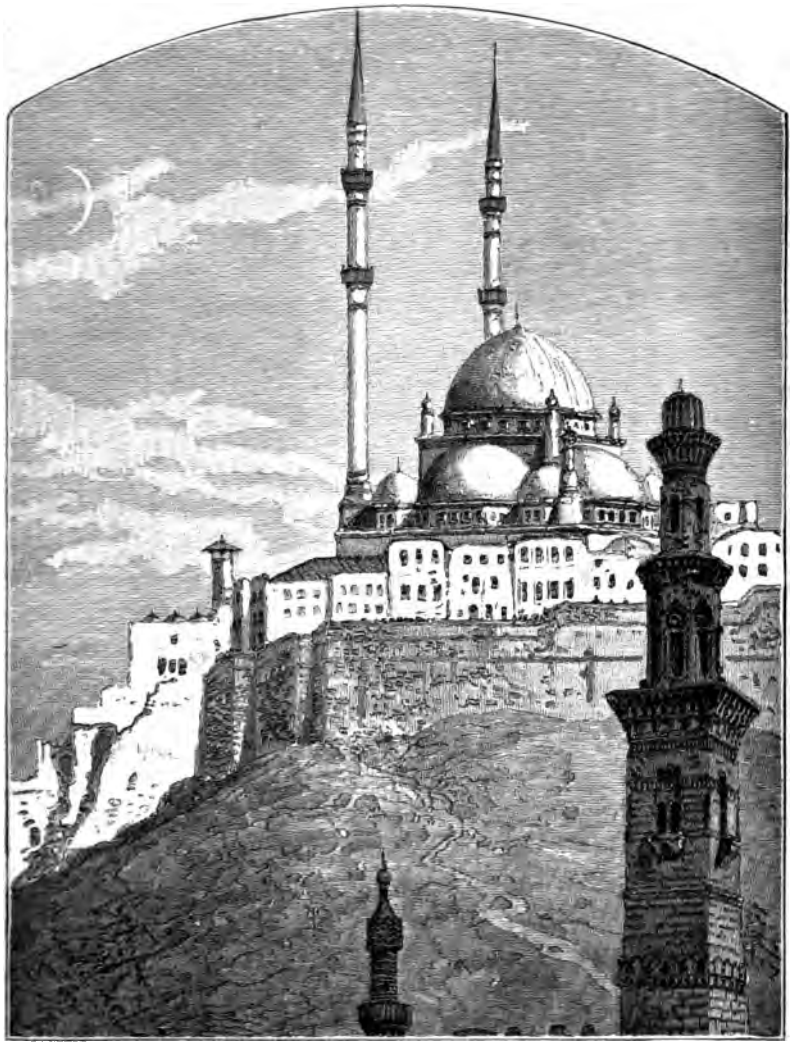


THE SHOE BAZAR.

while in the days before cannon was invented it doubtless formed a very strong position, its uselessness as a place of defence against modern attacks was demonstrated in 1805, when Mohammed 'Aly, planting a battery on a higher ridge, drove out the Turkish garrison. The fortress was built of massive stones brought from the pyramids, and its vaulted gateways, machicolated battlements, and formidable towers present an almost Norman aspect. The principal building within is Mohammed 'Aly's mosque, with its over-slender minarets, cruet-stand of domes, and gaudy decoration. The columns that procure it the name of "The Alabaster Mosque," were quarried near Beny Suweyf, but many of them were stolen by 'Abbâs Pasha for his palace, and replaced by wood. All Cairene building subsists on the principle of robbery. The Ptolemies stole the pillars of the Pharaohs; the Arabs used the materials of the Greeks and Romans; the Turks steal from most of their predecessors with their usual indiscriminating brigandage. The Citadel is an extraordinary medley of all styles and periods. Hieroglyphics blocks jostle Turkish lath-and-plaster; the eagle of Saladin looks down upon the flimsy ornaments of Isma'îl. The deep well called after Saladin, Joseph's Well, but believed by the Arabs to have been the identical pit into which the patriarch, son of Jacob, was cast by his envious brethren, is an enlargement of an ancient shaft. Though very deep—nearly three hundred feet—its slow supply, raised by oxen, has been superseded by the modern steam-pump. The mosque of En-Nâsir Mohammed, hard by, is a partly ruined building, despoiled of many of its adornments, but presenting much that is noteworthy in the history of Saracenic art. It was till lately used as an arsenal, but thanks to the influence of Major C. M. Watson, C.M.G., the old mosque was cleared out and as far as possible restored to its former condition, soon after the British occupation of the Citadel.

The Citadel is worth seeing, not only for itself, but for the view which spreads before the eye as one stands at sunset on its battlemented wall. Below lies the city with its countless domes and minarets—Sultan Hasan's in the foreground—its wilderness

of irregular tumble-down yellow and white flat-roofed houses,

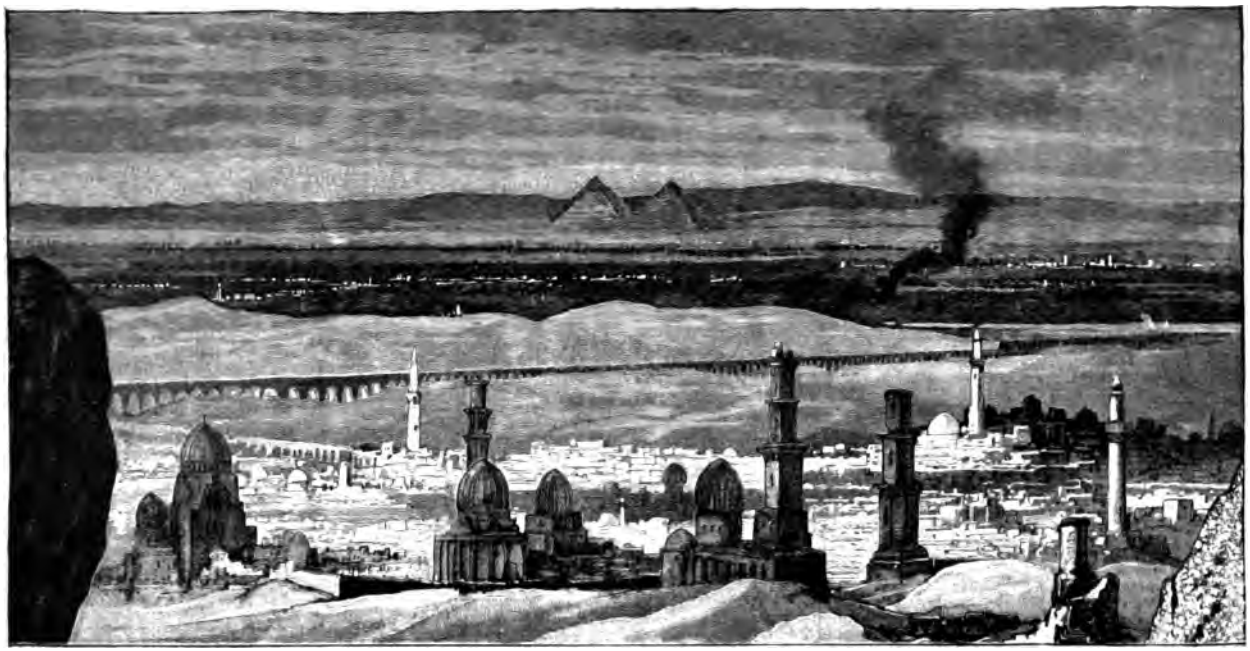


THE CITADEL, FROM THE TOMBS OF THE MAMLÛKS.

interspersed with many a garden and the dark foliage of sycamore trees; beyond, a fringe of palms and a streak of silver show where

the broad Nile rolls sleepily on between its brown banks. To the right, the huge dome and handsome minarets of El-Muayyad stand out prominently from among their fellows; beyond these the minarets of the range of mosques that flank the Nahhâsîn; and at the end the two queer-shaped towers of El-Hâkim. To the left is the enormous court and strange minaret of Ibn-Tûlûn's mosque; then the billowy mounds of Fustât; and in the distance, against the ridge that terminates the Libyan desert, in the carmine glory of the setting sun, stand the everlasting Pyramids, "like the boundary-marks of the mighty waste, the Egyptian land of shades." More to the left, the aqueduct which has brought water to the Citadel for nearly four centuries, stretches away to the Nile; and behind us is the picturesque cluster of the ruined "Tombs of the Mamlûks," or cemetery of El-Karâfa. Looking over the Mamlûk minarets, we can see the dim outlines of the Pyramids of Dahshûr and Abusîr, and the well-known form of the Step-Pyramid of Sakkara; and as the glow of sunset fades away, the evening clouds gather in the west, and the desert beyond takes up their shades of grey and blue, like a vast mid-African ocean.

When we have studied the old Fâtimy city, and inspected Saladin's Citadel, and looked down upon the magnificent prospect it commands, we have not yet seen all Cairo. South-west of the fortress is the oldest part of the capital embraced by Saladin's wall. This is the Hârat ibn-Tûlûn, or "Quarter of the Son of the Setting Moon," which represents the old suburb of Katâi', built by Ahmad ibn-Tûlûn to the north-east of the still older Fustât. The suburb was burnt and demolished to a great extent, and there is not much left of its original buildings; but the mosque of its founder still survives to show us what the art of the Saracens was in the ninth century, and what skill and labour an Eastern prince would expend upon his house of worship. This stately church was built in 879, at a cost of £72,000, after designs by a Christian architect, and it presents the peculiarity of having been entirely constructed of new materials. Instead of



VALLEY OF THE NILE, AND THE PYRAMIDS, FROM MOUNT MUKATTAM.

columns stolen from older monuments, the spacious court (ninety-nine yards every way) is surrounded by arcades resting on massive square brick pillars, with small Byzantine columns in gypsum, without bases, let into the four corners. Architects see in these the prototype of the Gothic clustered pillars. The lofty pointed arches, verging on the horse-shoe form, are bordered with exquisitely worked Kufic inscriptions and conventional foliage, and there is an upper row of what may be called triforium windows, of the most beautiful and varied designs, framed in an even more delicate embroidery of arabesques. The absence of stalactite ornamentation and the other characteristics of later buildings is significant of the period to which it belongs, and of which it is the most notable example. It stands to the Mamlûk mosques much as Early English does to the Perpendicular style; and in tracing the development of Saracenic architecture, which has its periods and transitions like the Gothic, it is of supreme importance. Among its titles to fame is the fact that it presents the earliest existing example of the universal employment of the pointed arch, which was not introduced in England till three centuries later. Unfortunately its impressive quadrangle is defaced by the bricking-up of most of the arches to shelter the beggars and "casuals" of Cairo, who infest and

ARCH IN MOSQUE OF IBN-TÛLÛN.

MINARET OF MOSQUE OF IBN-TÛLÛN.

disfigure the noble building. Ugly whitewashed walls now take the place of the cloisters on all sides but the east, and it is only there, in the *liwân* or sanctuary, that the original beauty of the design can be in some degree appreciated. Here, too, stands a carved pulpit of inlaid ivory and walnut-wood; which, however, is of a much later date. In the centre of the court is the covered fountain for ablutions, which was originally intended for the founder's tomb. The minaret, which is in a very ruinous state now, has the peculiarity of an external winding staircase, which was said to have been suggested to Ibn-Tûlûn by winding a strip of paper spirally round his finger. From the top one may look down upon the dilapidated remains of what was once the aristocratic quarter of the capital. Among the wilderness of flat roofs, we can trace the course of the Salîba street, which connects the Citadel with the south-west angle of Cairo, and here some of the most beautiful examples of the fast-disappearing lattice windows may still be seen.

Carrying the eye towards the north, a shining line is seen roughly dividing the old city from the new. This is the Khalîg, or Canal, which divides Cairo longitudinally from north-east to south-west into two strongly contrasted portions. West of the canal and next the Nile, the deforming touch of the Khedivial bricklayer has ruined everything mediaeval. East of the canal the old Muslim city of the Fâtimis still retains its picturesque character, and as we enter it we may almost forget for the moment that there ever was such a person as Isma'îl, the ex-Khedive, or such civilising agents as railways and frockcoats and the opera bouffe. Of the canal itself, it may be remarked *en passant* that, though it is a favourite subject for Cairene poets, and the inhabitants love to smoke their pipes and enjoy their *keyf* or siesta on the terraces overlooking it, and drowsily listen to the murmur of the water-wheel—

> Where bright Khaleega, like a spotted snake,
> Past meads and gardens trails her glittering coil—

it is only pretty during the four months when the Nile fills it,

THE CANAL.

while for the rest of the year "bright Khaleega" is a gutter of mud and the home of noisome smells. The people, however, are so fond of this unwholesome drain that no ruler dared risk his popularity by converting it into a street, though that is, undoubtedly, its proper destiny. Modern scientific irrigation, however, is working wonders in Egypt, and the old canal will not escape its influence.

In the gardens which fringe the Khalîg the fair inhabitants of the harîm enjoy the fragrance and tints of the rose and oleander and the other favourites of Cairene horticulture, unseen by the profane eye of man. It is true the ladies of Egypt do not take much interest in their flowers; the gardeners make formal bouquets for them, which they languidly admire, but they never dream of tending or even plucking the flowers themselves. Nevertheless, they enjoy "smelling the air," as they call it, amid their irregular parterres; and if we are to believe Bahâ-ed-dîn Zuheyr, an Egyptian poet of the thirteenth century, who wrote some charming verse which our lamented E. H. Palmer (who deserved so well of students of Palestine and Arabia) turned into no less charming English, these gardens of Cairo were once, and still may be, delightful places for lovers' meetings. The garden he described looked on the Nile, but in other respects the picture applies to many of the pleasure grounds in the heart of the city:—

I took my pleasure in a garden bright—
  Ah! that our happiest hours so quickly pass;
That time should be so rapid in its flight—
Therein my soul accomplished her delight,
  And life was fresher than the green young grass.

There raindrops trickle through the warm, still air,
  The cloud-born firstlings of the summer skies;
Full oft I stroll in early morning there,
When, like a pearl upon a bosom fair,
  The glistening dewdrop on the sapling lies.

There the young flowerets with sweet perfume blow;
  There feathery palms their pendant clusters hold,
Like foxes' brushes waving to and fro;
There every evening comes the after-glow,
  Tipping the leaflets with its liquid gold.

Beside that garden flowed the placid Nile.
Oft have I steered my *dahabiya* there;
Oft have I landed to repose awhile,
And bask and revel in the sunny smile
Of her whose presence made the place so fair.

West of the Tûlûn mosque the canal makes a sharp angle, and then, resuming its south-westerly direction, enters the Nile close to Masr El-'Atîka, or, as Europeans call it, "Old Cairo." The entrance of the canal (Fum El-Khalîg) is opposite the island of Rôda, where is the famous Nilometer, or well for measuring the height of the inundation. Until the river has risen to the height of sixteen cubits in the Nilometer, an old law enacts that no land-tax can be levied. The Government, however, of course used to take care to publish a falsified measurement before the due time, and thus induce the peasants to begin payment. Long before even this official date a public crier goes about, accompanied by a boy, announcing the portentous height of the river. "God preserve the master of this house," he cries, stopping before your door, "and increase upon him His favours. O Bountiful, O God!" "Ay, please God!" choruses the boy. "God preserve to me my mistress, the chief lady among brides, such a one" (naming your wife, perhaps) "for a long period! O Bountiful, O God!" "Ay, please God!" from the boy. Then comes the information that the Nile is rising abundantly. "Five digits to-day: and the Lord is bountiful!" To which the acolyte adds, "Bless ye Mohammed!" to avert the possible effects of the evil eye. The people do not, however, pay much attention to the crier's daily announcements until the last day before the government proclamation of "Full Nile," which is to be signalised by cutting the dam of the canal and letting the river run in. On that day the crier goes about with additional pomp, accompanied by a crowd of little boys carrying coloured flags, and announces that it is now the *Wefâ en-Nil* (Fulness of the Nile). "The river hath given abundance," he cries, "and fulfilled its measure." At which the boys shout, "God hath given abundance." "The canals flow—and the vessels are afloat—and the hoarder of grain has failed—by permission of the

Mighty, the Requiter," &c., interrupted at each clause by the refrain of the boys, "*Ofa-llah!*" "God hath given abundance." "This is an annual custom," continues the crier. "God hath given abundance," repeat the boys. "And may you live to every year!" "God hath given abundance!" "And if the hoarder of grain wish for a scarcity—" "God hath given abundance!" "May God visit him with blindness and affliction ere he dies!" "God hath given abundance!" "This generous person" (here the crier personally addresses himself to the master of the house before which he is standing) "loveth the generous—an admirable palace is built for him in Paradise—and its columns are incomparable jewels—instead of palm-sticks and timber—and it has a thousand windows that open—and before every window is Selsebîl (the fountain of the Blest)—Paradise is the abode of the generous—and Hell is the abode of the niggardly." In every pause the boys ejaculate, "God hath given abundance!" "May God not cause me to stop before the door of an avaricious woman, nor of an avaricious man," continues the crier sarcastically—"nor of one who measures the water in a jar—nor who counts the bread while it is yet dough—and if a cake be wanting orders a fast—nor who shuts up the cats at supper time—nor who drives away the dogs upon the wall." "God hath given abundance!" echo the boys. "The world is brightened, and the damsels have adorned themselves—and the old women tumble about—and the married man hath added to his wife eight others—and the bachelor hath married eighteen!" "God hath given abundance!" By this time somebody, afraid of his scorn of avarice, or cajoled by his flatteries and humour, has given a piastre or two to the crier, who then moves on to the next house.

The adornment of the damsels and the excitement of the old women and the extravagances of bachelors and married men find their crowning point in the festivities of cutting the earthen dam of the canal, which takes place on the following day. The dam has been standing ever since the rising of the Nile, and towers to a height of some twenty-two feet above the lowest level of the river. Some way off in front of the dam stands a round pillar

A WATER-WHEEL ON THE CANAL.

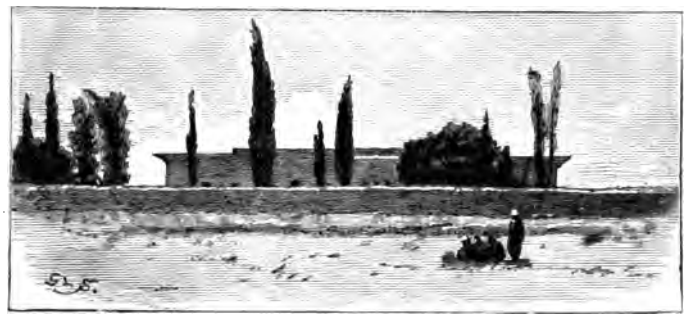
of earth, resembling a truncated cone, which is called the *'arûsa*, or "Bride," on the top of which a little maize or millet is sown. The demolition of the "Bride of the Nile" by the rising tide is a special feature in the ceremonies of the season, and is doubtless a survival of some very ancient superstition. The Mohammedans, however, have their own explanation of its origin.

"It is believed that the custom of forming this *'arûsa* arose from a superstitious usage, which is mentioned by Arab authors, and among them by El-Makrîzy. This historian relates that in the year of the conquest of Egypt by the Arabs, 'Amr ibn El-Âsy the Arab general, was told that the Egyptians were accustomed at the period when the Nile began to rise, to deck a young virgin in gay apparel, and throw her into the river as a sacrifice, to ensure a plentiful inundation. This barbarous custom, it is said, he abolished, and the Nile, in consequence, did not rise in the least degree during a space of nearly three months after the usual period of the commencement of its increase. The people were greatly alarmed, thinking that a famine would certainly ensue. 'Amr therefore wrote to the Khalif to inform him of what he had done, and of the calamity with which Egypt was in consequence threatened. 'Omar returned a brief answer, expressing his approbation of 'Amr's conduct, and desiring him, upon the receipt of the letter, to throw a note which it enclosed into the Nile. The purport of this note was as follows:—'*From 'Abd-Allah 'Omar, Prince of the Faithful, to the Nile of Egypt. If thou flow of thine own accord, flow not; but if it be God, the One, the Mighty, who causeth thee to flow, we implore God, the One, the Mighty, to make thee flow.*' 'Amr did as he was commanded, and the Nile, we are told, rose sixteen cubits in the following night."*

The evening before the cutting of the dam, the Nile about Rôda becomes very gay and animated. Boats of all kinds and sizes bring visitors to witness the ceremony, and a great state barge, carrying cannon and ornamented with lanterns and decorations, sails with much pomp from Bûlâk, and moors to the island

* Lane, *Modern Egyptians*, chap. xxvi.

opposite the entrance of the canal. The land is as fully peopled as the water; crowds gather on the mainland near Masr El-'Atîka and on the island, and tents are pitched for their shelter and refreshment. A Cairo crowd easily amuses itself; coffee and pipes will generally content it, and the mere prospect of something going to be done is enough to make it very happy. All that night nobody sleeps. If he wished to, the constant firing of guns from the big barge, the beating of drums on the other boats, the discharge of rockets, and general babel of noises would render the desire abortive. But no one harbours so foolish a wish: the mere sight of the Nile that night is a scene out of fairyland. Boats gaily



PALACE ON THE ISLAND OF RODA.

decked and covered with coloured lamps pass to and fro, their crews merrily dinning away at the *târ* and *darabukka;* every now and then a rocket flies up against the quiet stars, and the whole air is alive with sounds and sights of gaiety and innocent frolic. It is like Venice in the old carnival time, only the voices and dresses are changed, and we cannot help feeling that, like the carnival, this ceremony belongs to an older state of things and an older religion. As we gaze upon the crowd we feel dimly that the priest of Isis ought to be there.

Early next morning the workmen are busy cutting away the dam, till only the thickness of a foot is left. Soon after sunrise the officials begin to appear: the Governor of Cairo rides up, the

Kâdy reads a turgid document, a boat bearing another officer is pushed through the mud wall, purses of gold are flung about, and the Nile is soon flowing rapidly between the banks of the Khalîg, and rejoicing the hearts of the Cairenes who dwell beside it. Reserve and decency are thrown to the winds, and all the world goes bathing.

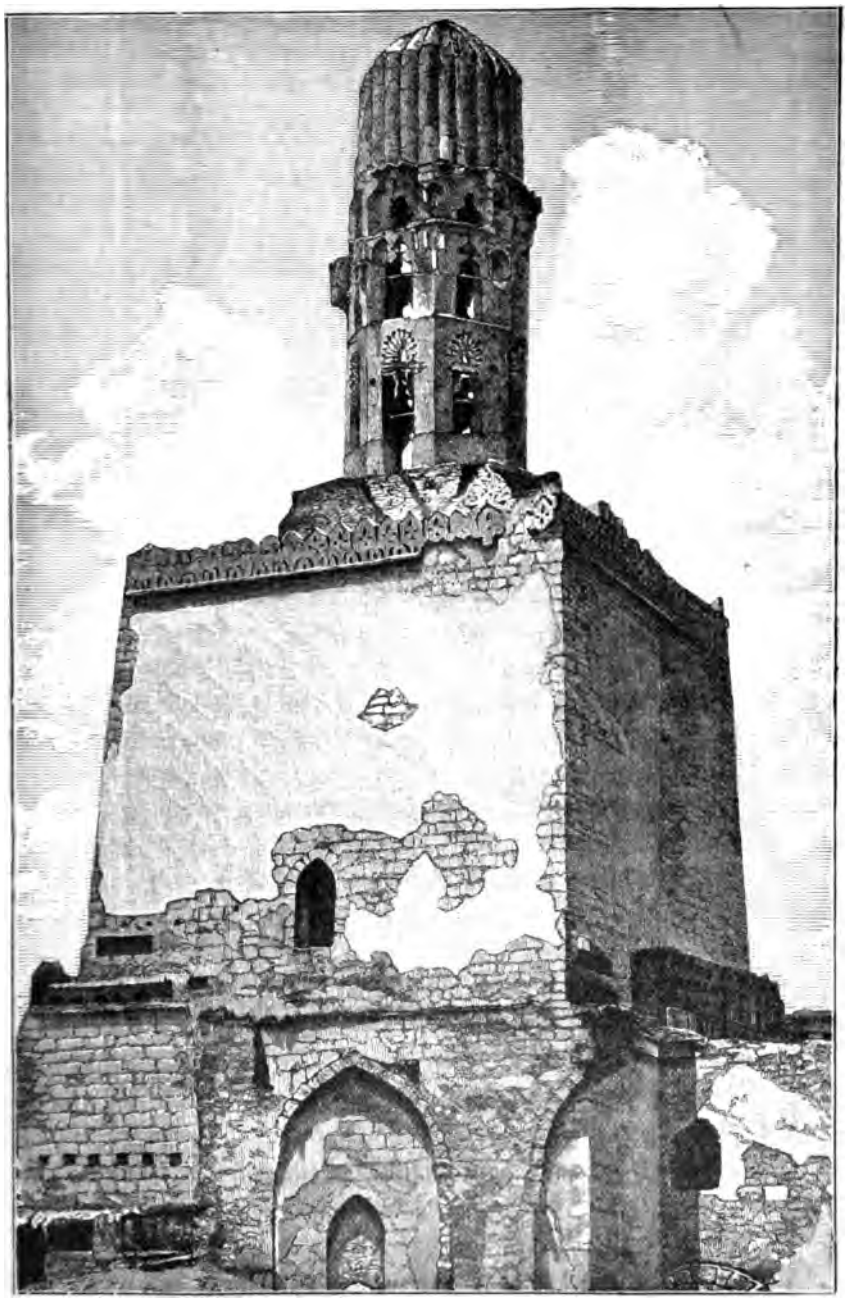
CHAPTER II

THE MOSQUES OF CAIRO

As we traverse the old High Street from end to end, we see some of the most famous of the mosques of Cairo. There are upwards of three hundred of these beautiful and characteristic buildings in the city, to say nothing of smaller chapels; but a great many have fallen into decay (though not into disuse, as the crowd of worshippers testifies on Fridays even in some of the most dilapidated mosques), and there are perhaps not more than thirty that present notably distinctive features. Of these, nine lie in the direct route from the Gate of Conquests along the High Street to the Citadel. Beside the gate is the ruined mosque of El-Hâkim, with its fine Kufic frieze and curious minarets, almost the only important building, besides the walls and gates, and a portion of the Azhar mosque, that survives to commemorate the rule of the Fâtimy Khalifs. Side by side, in the Coppersmith's Bazar, stand the three mosques of the Mamlûk Sultans Barkûk, En-Nâsir, and Kalaûn, with their handsome portals and minarets. Unhappily the late tasteless régime did its best to deface them. The original builders had combined the colours of the alternate layers of pale red and yellowish white stone in such a manner as to produce a soft and harmonious effect which can hardly be believed by those who have not seen it. To the eye of the ex-Khedive's decorators, however, these subtle tints appeared merely washed-out colours that ought to be freshened up; and the arrival of visitors for the extravagant festivities that celebrated the opening of the Suez Canal

presented an occasion for refurbishing the faded monuments of Cairo which could not be neglected. So the viceregal paintpot was put into requisition, and the subdued colours of the façades were "daubed with vulgar ruddle and glaring yellow" by the common house-painter, till his vile "jack-pudding pattern of stripes," as Georg Ebers indignantly exclaims, "disgraces the noble monuments" upon which the skilful architects of the Middle Ages bestowed so much thought and taste. The modern Turks can build nothing themselves but tawdry palaces and gaudy, tasteless, over-ornamented mosques; and the edifices they do set up are so insecurely built that they will infallibly come down before long amid the plaudits of a critical posterity. But if they cannot create they can spoil; and it is hard to know which deserves the greater damnation, their neglect or their restoration of the monuments of Cairo.

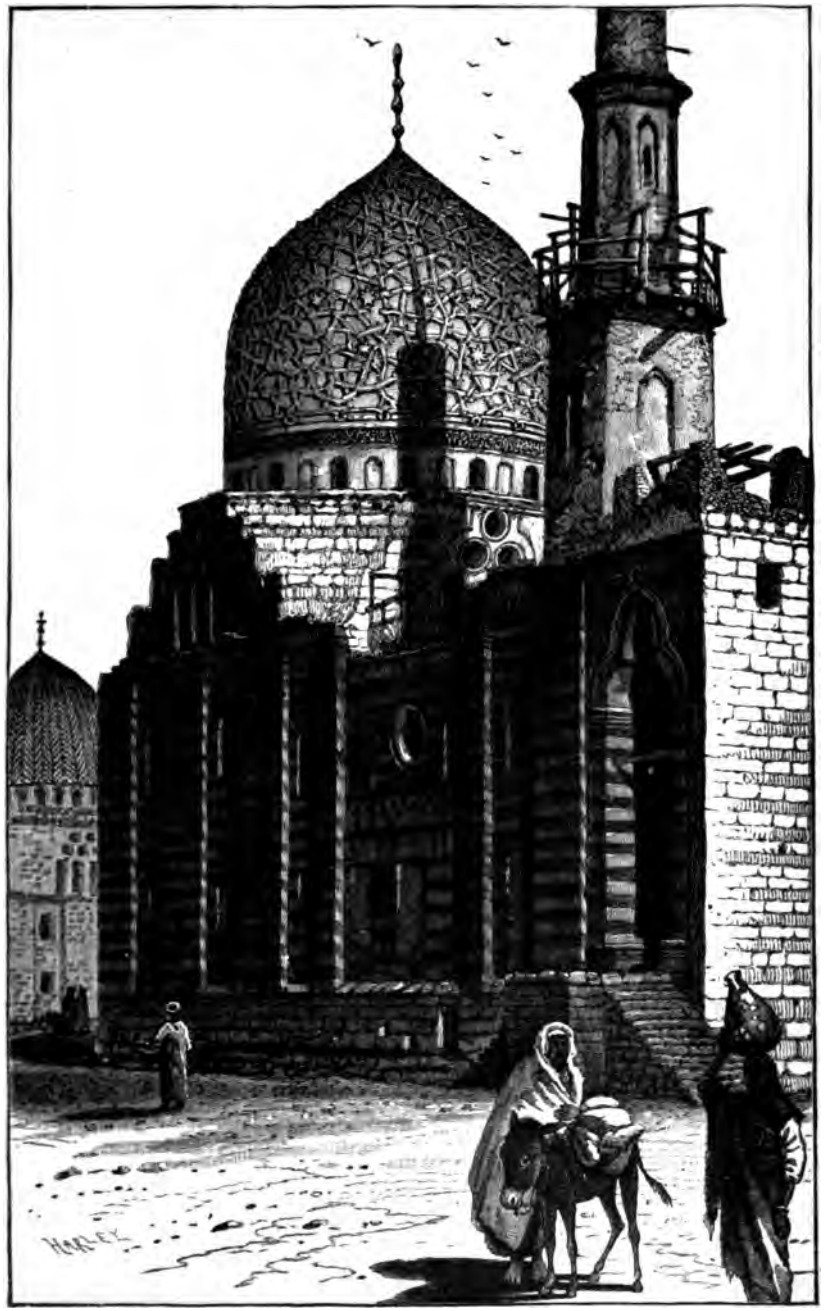
The Mamlûks, who built most of the mosques, were probably as bad a set of rulers as the best-abused Sultans of Turkey, or their representatives, the elder Khedives; many of them were of Turkish, though not of Ottoman, blood. But at least they had a not ignoble ambition to adorn their capital with beautiful buildings, and if personal vanity entered into their motives it was a vanity which excuses itself by its display. En-Nâsir, one of the best of the Mamlûk kings, spent eight thousand pieces of gold a day on building, and this when the forced labour which reared all the monuments of Egypt, from the Pyramids to Port Sa'îd, struck out the item of wages. More than thirty mosques, besides mausoleums and other works, sprang up in his reign. Yet his own mosque in the Coppersmith's Bazar is one of the least of its kind, and its salient feature, the marble portal, is not Arab at all, but was subsequently brought by another Sultan as a war trophy from Acre. The mosque and hospital, called the Mâristân of Kalaûn, next to it, is a much more interesting structure. It was built at the end of the thirteenth century for the purpose of a hospital, wherein rich and poor were gratuitously treated and fed. There were wards for every different disease that was known, and a hall



MIBKHARA OF THE MOSQUE OF EL-HÂKIM.

where the chief doctor delivered his lectures. In the religious part of the building fifty salaried readers of the Korân publicly taught the Mohammedan religion, and a librarian with five assistants superintended a fine collection of medical, legal, theological, and grammatical books. Lecture-rooms were allotted to teachers of the four orthodox sects of Islâm, and sixty orphans were gratuitously maintained and educated in a state-supported school. This noble institution was used till lately as a lunatic asylum, but is now in ruins. Tinkers batter their pans where surgeons formerly operated; coppersmiths are soldering pots where once the learned expounded the law; and except the richly decorated tomb, a singularly noble structure, and a plainer mosque opposite it, little is preserved of the famous Mâristân. Women resort to the tomb to pray for male offspring, and mothers take their infants thither to have their "tongues loosed," which is effectually accomplished by squeezing lemon juice upon the red stone and making the distressful babies lick it, with the immediate result of piercing screams and the perfect satisfaction of the mothers. People who suffer from headaches also go to touch the turban of Kalaûn, a piece of which is preserved, together with part of his *kaftân* or coat, which when wrapped round the body is believed to be a cure for ague.

Further along the High Street, at the corner of the Musky, is the mosque and medresa of El-Ashraf Bars Bey ("Prince Panther"), who also built a mosque in the Eastern Cemetery of Kâït Bey; and a little beyond, in the part called the Ghûrîya, are the two mosques of El-Ghûry, the last of the Mamlûk Sultans; that on the left hand (the tomb-mosque) has been restored with some skill, while that on the right, so far untouched, is a cruciform building with richly coloured ceilings and fine cornices. Further on still, with its minarets rising from the strange old gateway called the Bâb Zuweyla, is the mosque of El-Muayyad, another Mamlûk, with a fine bronze gate which once belonged to the magnificent mosque of another prince of the same dynasty, Sultan Hasan, which stands in the Rumeyla in front of the Citadel, and is considered the stateliest monument of Saracenic art in



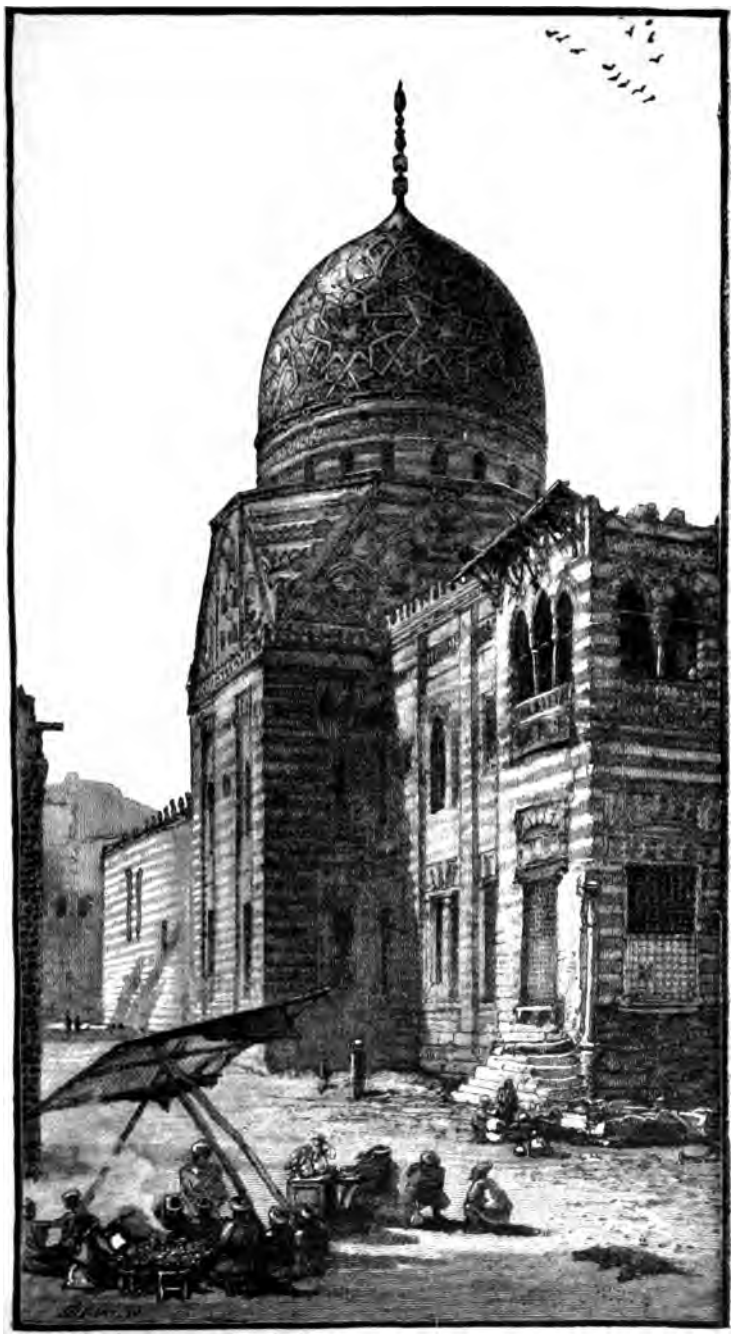
TOMB-MOSQUE OF EL-ASHRAF BARS BEY, IN THE EASTERN CEMETERY.

Egypt. If instead of proceeding to the Citadel, we turn up the prolongation of the Musky towards the eastern wall, we shall find on the left the peculiarly sacred and unsightly mosque of the Hasaneyn, where the severed head of the martyred Hoseyn, the hero of the Persian Passion Play, is believed to be buried; while on the other side is the Azhar, the university mosque of Cairo—indeed the university of the whole Mohammedan world, whose ten thousand students come from India and the west coast of Africa, and even more remote regions, to learn Koranic exegesis and the decisions of the three hundred learned Ulemâ who teach them without fee.

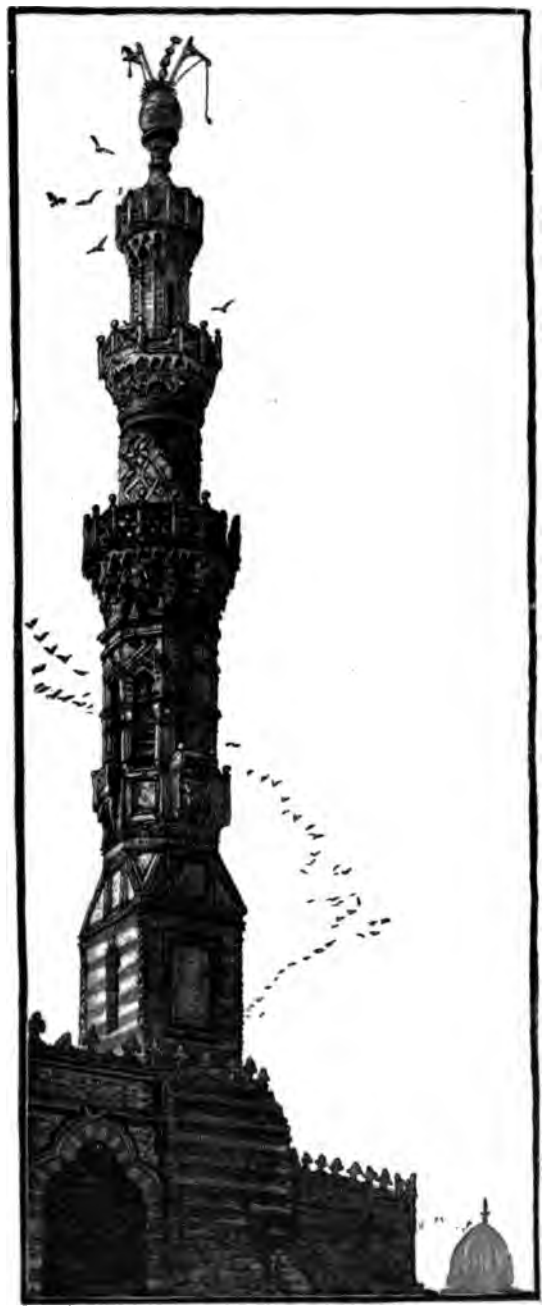
The street is closed by the Bâb El-Ghurayeb, beyond which are huge mounds of rubbish without the city, and a collection of tomb-mosques, forming the cemetery known to the natives as that of Kâït Bey, but to Europeans as "the Tombs of the Khalifs." The tombs, however, are not those of Khalifs, but of the Mamlûk Sultans. The tomb-mosque of Kâït Bey, distinguished by an exquisite fawn-coloured dome and delicate minaret, deservedly gives its name to this Eastern Cemetery; but the neighbouring tomb-mosque of Barkûk, with its picturesque cloisters and splendid pulpit of chiselled stone, is scarcely less beautiful. Under one of its two noble domes the founder of the house of Circassian Mamlûks sleeps after his career of conquest, the other covers the bones of his family, while his son and successor rests hard by. The tomb-mosques of El-Ghûry, El-Ashraf Bars Bey, and other Sultans stand around, while some very beautiful smaller tombs, like that of Sitta Khawend Umm Anûk, a wife of En-Nâsir Mohammed, are sprinkled amongst them.

The plans of mosques vary considerably in detail, especially if they are built to contain the founder's tomb; but the fundamental idea is always the same—an open court surrounded by a covered cloister, corresponding to the *atrium* of the Greek basilica.* The main variation consists in converting the four cloistered sides into four deep

* See my *Art of the Saracens of Egypt* (1886), pp. 49-75, for fuller details of mosques and their decoration.



TOMB-MOSQUE OF KÂIT BEY, IN THE EASTERN CEMETERY.



MINARET OF THE TOMB-MOSQUE OF KÂIT BEY.

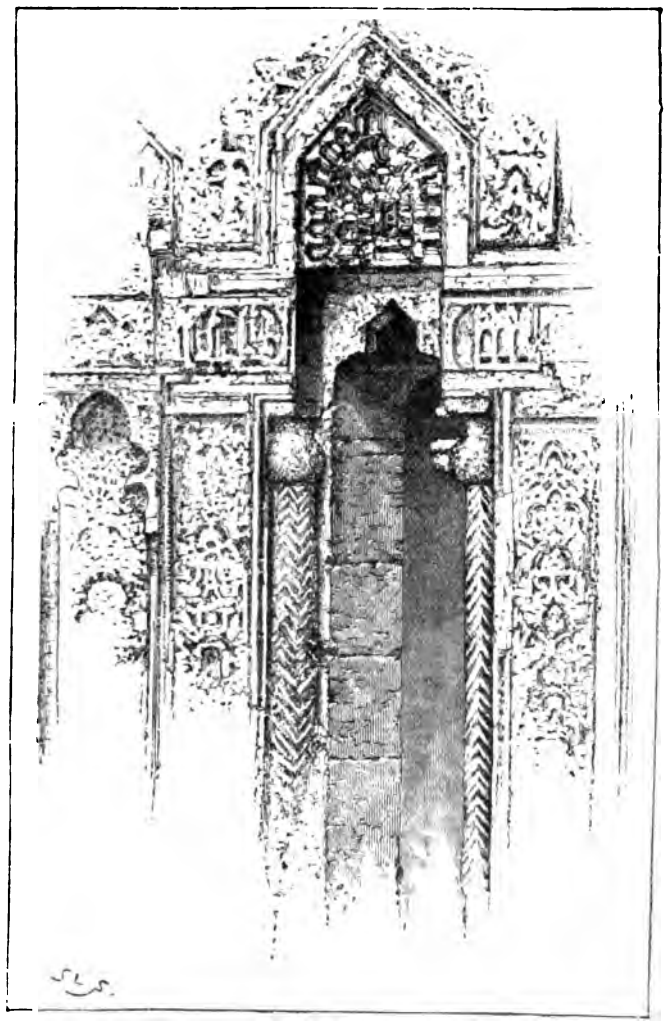
transepts so as to form a cruciform interior, whilst the spaces left in the angles of four transepts are filled by additional chambers, schools, and the like. This is a distinguishing feature of the *medresa* or collegiate mosque.* In either case, whether the court be surrounded by cloisters with double rows of columns supporting pointed arches on which the heavy carved beams of the flat ceiling rest, or by four transepts with vaulted roofs and only one grand arch to each, the cloister or transept to the east (*i.e.* towards Mekka) is deeper than the

* Max van Berchem, *Notes d'Archéologie Arabe*, p. 21.

PORTAL OF THE TOMB-MOSQUE OF KÂIT BEY.

other three, has more than two rows of columns, or is separated by a carved screen from the court. This is the sanctuary (*liwân*). The floor is raised, and on it the worshippers prostrate themselves, with their faces turned to the niche (*mihrâb*), a sort of undeveloped apse, in the centre of the east wall, which marks the *kibla* or direction of Mekka. This niche is the chief point for decoration; it is inlaid with porphyry and marbles and mother-of-pearl, and framed with borders of good words from the Korân, written in the beautiful Arabic character. On the right of the niche stands the pulpit, ingeniously constructed of intricate geometrical panels, inlaid with ivory, and adorned with inscriptions. Near the front of the sanctuary is the platform, resting on simple dwarf columns, where the Korân is read aloud. If there be a chapel for the founder's tomb, it is generally behind or at the side of the sanctuary; and over it, or over the sanctuary, rises the dome, which, though borrowed from Byzantine models, has been so completely naturalised as to form the most characteristic feature in Saracenic architecture. Perhaps the bulb-shaped dome reminded the Arabs of their primaeval tent, and the minaret recalled the palm-tree up which the first mueddin clomb to chant the call to prayer. The minarets rise from the corners of the cloisters, or near the portal of the cruciform mosque, but their position, like their number, is variable. The exterior of a mosque is either quite plain or slightly decorated with mouldings and inscriptional friezes, and sometimes the whole building is enclosed by a brick wall and outer courts to isolate the devotions of the people from the noises outside. The chief external ornaments are the domes and minarets and the gateway, but inside a great variety of decoration is employed. Arcades of horse-shoe or pointed arches are supported by Greek and Roman columns stolen from older buildings, or square pillars with inlaid corner columns, while graceful corbels and stalactite brackets break the sharpness of the angles. The walls are covered with Kufic inscriptions and arabesques in wood or plaster, marbles of divers colours form a dado round the sanctuary, while windows of coloured glass, set in plaster tracery, shed a soft enchanted light.

In spite of a general uniformity of plan in the main outline, there are few among the three hundred mosques of Cairo that do



MIHRÂB, OR NICHE, OF A MOSQUE.

not possess some distinctive feature, some fragment of decoration—a variety of mosaic, or of tiles, or carving—which is well worth

seeing, and a visitor in Cairo may pass a whole winter in exploring the mosques without seeing all that is beautiful. The mosques of 'Amr (A.D. 643), of Ibn-Tûlûn (A.D. 873), of El-Hâkim (A.D. 1000), of Kalaûn (A.D. 1287), Sultan Hasan (A.D. 1356), and Kâït Bey (A.D. 1470), will, however, give a fairly comprehensive idea of the history of mosque architecture, without confusing the spectator with details which can only become intelligible after careful study.

"The first mosque built in Egypt was erected, soon after the Mohammedan conquest of the country, by the conqueror himself, 'Amr ibn El-Asy, at his new capital, the city of Fustât, and it still bears his name. It is sometimes alluded to by old writers as 'The Mosque of Conquest,' and is also known as 'The Crown of the Mosques.' The foundation of this mosque was laid in the twenty-first year of the Hijra, corresponding with A.D. 643. According to early Arab historians it was a very simple structure originally, but was enlarged and enriched with the spoils of churches and temples by succeeding rulers of Egypt, and attained its present magnificent dimensions apparently in the tenth century of our era. Since that period it has been restored again and again, having suffered from war, fire, and earthquake. Saladin, in the twelfth century, greatly embellished it; where he found stone and wood he left marble. Although in ruins now, it is still one of the most interesting buildings of Mohammedan origin.* It stands to the eastward of the present Masr El-'Atîka (Old Cairo), on the confines of the mounds of rubbish, the charred and calcined remains of that part of the ancient city of Fustât which was destroyed by order of Shâwir, the vizîr of the last of the Fâtimy Khalifs, in A.D. 1168, to prevent its falling a prey to the Crusaders, led by Amaury, King of Jerusalem, who had already destroyed the town of Bilbeys, in the Delta, and were then marching towards Fustât. There is nothing to be seen outside but the long, high, grey brick walls rising amid the mounds of rubbish, without windows or architectural adornment of any kind, and two plain minarets and

* See Mr. Corbett's valuable paper on this mosque in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1891).

a palm-tree above them; but on entering the stranger recognises with astonishment the vast extent and imposing character of the building, with its lofty colonnades, its immense number of marble columns, and its spacious open court, three hundred and thirty-nine feet wide, and three hundred and ninety feet long, in which thousands of worshippers could easily assemble. In the centre is an octagonal *Hanafiya*, or raised reservoir, shaded by a wooden

MOSQUE OF 'AMR, OLD CAIRO.

roofing, supported by eight marble columns. Round the edge jets are placed at convenient distances apart, that the faithful may perform their ceremonial ablutions in running water before beginning their prayers. A palm and thorn-tree, planted long ago, still flourish near this fountain.

"The *Liwân*, or Sanctuary, on the eastern side of the court, is in a good state of preservation. Here there are six rows of columns,

and also a row of pilasters attached to the eastern wall; these support lofty arches, and thus form six arcades, above which there is a flat roof of unconcealed rafters. These arches, which are quite plain, and with a few exceptions, of a circular form, are evidently modern. They spring from square piers built above the columns. Old historians describe the roof as 'very low;' it was probably originally supported by columns only. There are some examples of the pointed arch between the pilasters in the southern wall, the dates of which are uncertain; it is probable they are of the ninth century of our era. The columns are formed of marble of many kinds, and are surmounted by richly carved capitals of various orders of architecture, Classical and Byzantine. They have been appropriated from Christian churches and more ancient temples for the adornment of this mosque. They are not of uniform height, but this defect has generally been remedied by raising some of the bases higher than others. Sometimes an inverted capital has been used to raise a column to the required height, without any regard to its style, the size evidently being the only point considered in its selection. The arches do not follow the direction of the walls, as in ordinary cloisters, but form arcades from north to south, and unarched aisles from west to east. There are cross-bars of wood between all the columns, just above the capitals. Each capital is surmounted by an abacus of sycamore-wood, on which the beams rest. Thus all the columns are linked together, and the bars serve for the suspension of lamps. According to the historian El-Makrîzy, this mosque was at one period lighted every night by eighteen thousand lamps, and possessed twelve hundred and ninety copies of the Korân.

"The *Kibla*, or prayer niche, is in the middle of the eastern wall, and near to it is a pulpit, in front of which there is a grey marble column bearing the name of Mohammed. This column is believed by Muslims to have been transported miraculously from Mekka to Cairo, at the request of 'Amr, when he was building the mosque. The mark of the Prophet's whip, or *kurbâg* (a streak of white in the grey marble), is shown as a proof of the

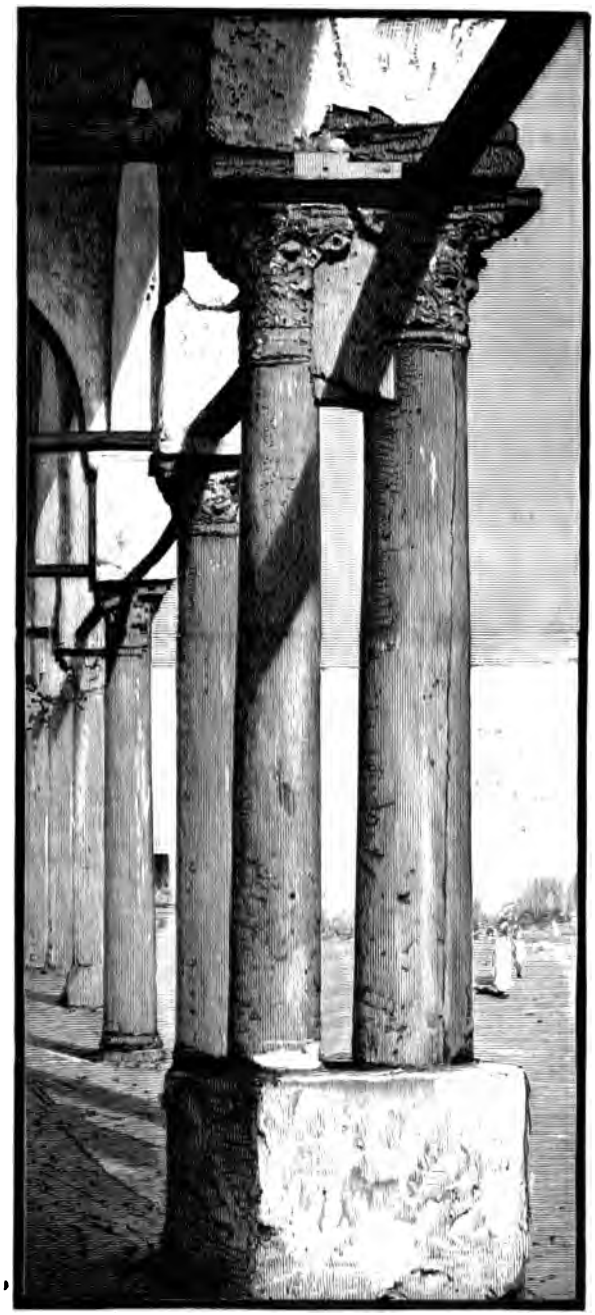
EAST CLOISTERS, OR LÎWÂN, THE MOSQUE OF 'AMR, OLD CAIRO.

miracle. It is said that after he had twice commanded it in vain to move, he struck it with his whip, shouting, 'I command thee in the name of Allah, O column, arise, betake thyself to Misr!' It is unfortunate for the probability of this legend that Misr, *i.e.* Egypt, was not conquered till after the Prophet's death. On the western colonnade there were formerly many double columns, but only one pair now remains. These two columns are near the entrance, and are placed at a distance of only eight or ten inches apart. Visitors are invited, as a test of faith or piety, to endeavour to squeeze themselves between them. There is at Jerusalem, within the Haram esh-Sherîf, a similar 'narrow way'—a curiously literal representation of the 'narrow way that leadeth to eternal life.'

"No very recent attempts have been made to preserve or restore this building, and yet there is a tradition to the effect that the downfall of this Mosque of 'Amr and of Mohammedanism will be simultaneous. Probably this belief at one time had considerable influence in prompting its repeated restorations." *

Proceeding in chronological order, the next important mosque in Cairo is that of Ibn-Tûlûn, built on the eminence known as the Kal'at-El-Kebsh, or "Fort of the Ram," which has been described in the preceding chapter.† The mosque of El-Hâkim (built between 990 and 1002), the notorious mad Khalif, whose name is associated with the mysterious doctrines of the Druses, and whose caprices and cruelties fill a terrible chapter of Egyptian history, preserves much of its original form, though it was repaired by Es-Sâlih Ayyûb, grand-nephew of Saladin, about 1242, and has since suffered greatly from earthquakes and neglect. Its splendid open court is strewn with fragments of columns, and was used till lately as a rope-walk, a dyer's drying-ground, and a glass manufactory. The original entrances are walled up, and visitors now enter through a café, a brewery, or a glass factory, where beads and bracelets are made for sale in the Sûdân. The fine arcade of pointed and horseshoe arches on the

* E. T. Rogers and Miss Rogers in *The Art Journal* for 1880, p. 17 (abridged).
† See pp. 20—24.

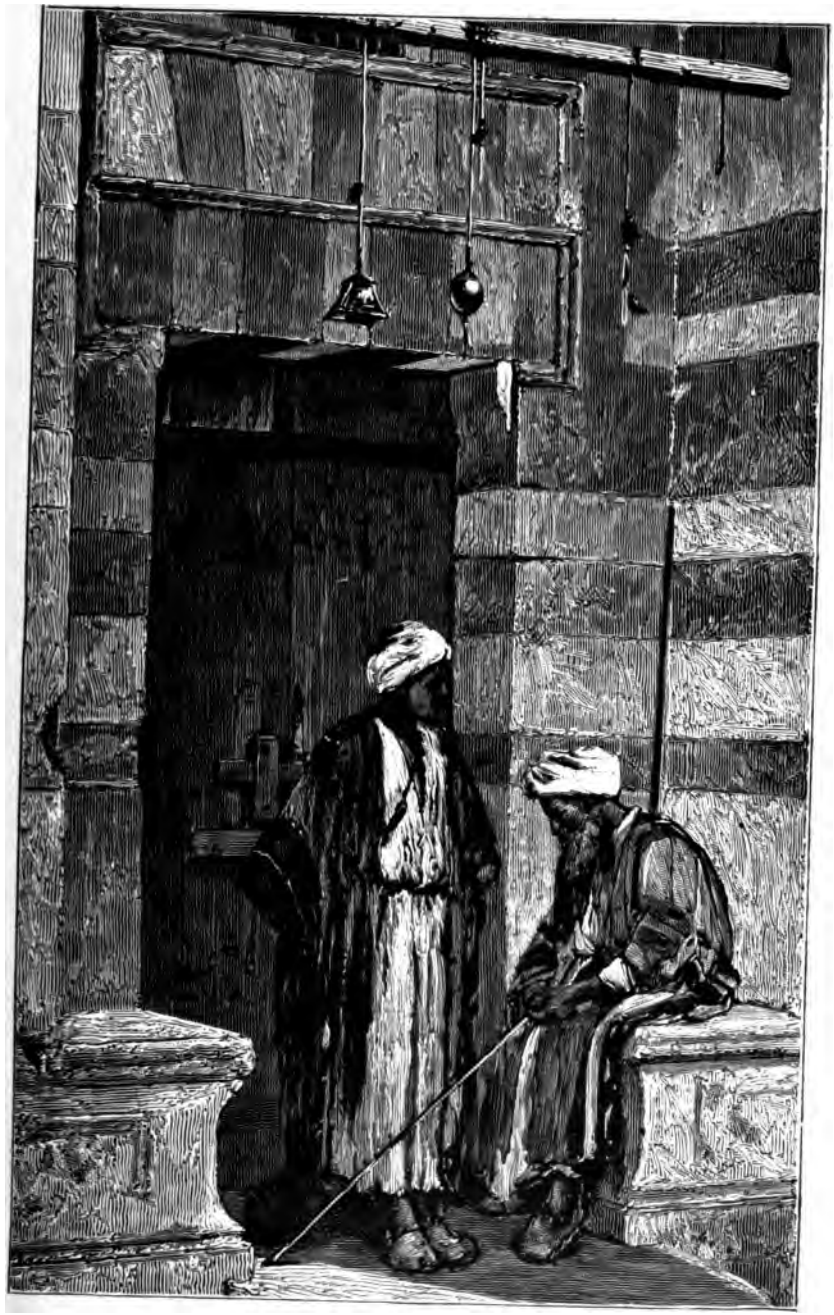


THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE, MOSQUE OF 'AMR.

west side is filled up and turned into workshops, over which tower the peculiar minarets (called *mibkharas*, or incense-burners), shored up with heavy bases like the pylons of an Egyptian temple. The northern wall of the court connects the two ancient city gates, the Gate of Victory and the Gate of Conquests, and during the French occupation was loopholed for muskets.

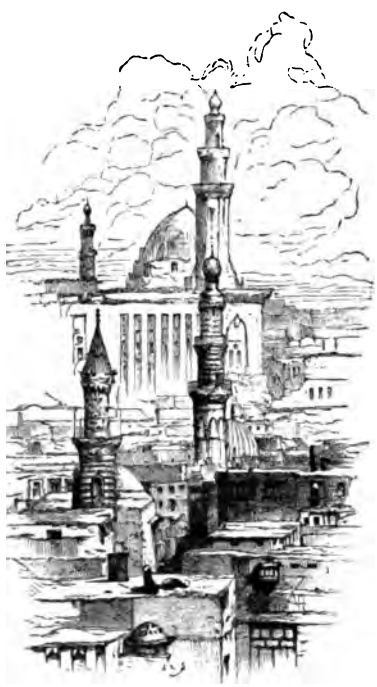
The eastern arcades, or *liwân*, are deeper and have more rows of arches; and here are the pulpit, the niche that points to Mekka, and the rest of the simple furniture of a Mohammedan place of worship. Neither the niche nor the pulpit is remarkable as a specimen of Saracenic Art, but the noble Kufic inscription which runs round the building above the arches, close to the plain palm-beam roof, is a magnificent example of that most characteristic of Muslim arts, calligraphy. The mosque of El-Hâkim has, however, long ceased to be used for prayer, and the Minister of the Wakf—a sort of ecclesiastical commissioner—allowed it to be set apart for the purposes of a Museum of Arab Art, for which indeed few more suitable home could be found than this earliest mosque of Kâhira, built by the son and the grandson of the Fâtimy Khalif who conquered Egypt in the middle of the tenth century and founded those magnificent twin palaces which in time developed into the modern city of Cairo. The collection, however, has now been moved to other quarters, but I am not aware that its ultimate destination is yet decided.

What is commonly regarded as the grandest example of Mohammedan architecture in Cairo is the mosque of Sultan Hasan, in front of the Citadel. It was built in 1356-9 by El-Melik En-Nâsir Abu-l-Ma'âly Hasan ibn Mohammed ibn Kalaûn, which, being interpreted, is "The Victorious King, Father of Excellences, Comely, son of Much-praised, son of Duck"; and during its three years' building it cost twenty thousand dirhems per day, or about eight hundred pounds. El-Makrîzy, who wrote his famous "Topography of Cairo" fifty years after the foundation of the mosque, says that it "surpassed all the mosques ever built in any part of the Mohammedan Empire." Its great court, paved with marble and



ENTRANCE TO A MOSQUE.

open to the sky, is one hundred and fourteen by one hundred and five feet square. In its four transepts, or deep arched recesses, hang hundreds of lamp-chains, and numbers of devotees find rest and shelter daily. The Lîwân, or Sanctuary, is spanned by a splendid arch ninety feet high; here are the prayer niche and the reader's platform: the raised daïs is strewn with prayer-carpets. All round, at the level of the spring of the great arch, is a broad belt of bold Kufic characters—a chapter of the Korân—carved in stone on a ground of beautiful scroll-work. A door to the right of the niche leads to the shrine of Sultan Hasan. "It is a ruinous, but majestic structure, crowned with a dome one hundred and eighty feet in height. The inner doors communicating with this apartment are covered with bronze plates, bordered and intersected by an interlacing band of solid bronze, the whole engraved and inlaid with fine lines of gold and silver of the most exquisite designs."



MOSQUE OF SULTAN HASAN, FROM THE SOUTH-WEST.

"The outer walls of this stately mosque are nearly a hundred feet in height, and they are capped by a cornice thirteen feet high, projecting six feet, formed of stalactite, or pendentive ornament, which has ever since been a marked feature in Arabian architecture. The arches of the doorways and of the numerous windows, and even the capitals of the columns built into the external angles of the

walls, are similarly enriched. The great doorway in the northern side is situated in a recess sixty-six feet in height. The design of the columns supporting the arch is very peculiar: the base is square, and as it ascends in opposing triangular facets, it assumes an octagonal form, from which rises the cylindrical column. The minaret is also gracefully converted from a square at its base to an octagon in its upper part, and is the highest minaret in existence, measuring two hundred and eighty feet. A companion minaret fell with disastrous loss of life; and a third, but smaller minaret, stands at the north angle."*

FOUNTAIN IN THE COURT OF THE MOSQUE OF SULTAN HASAN.

It is, however, more by its size than by the beauty of its decoration that the mosque of Sultan Hasan has assumed the first place among the buildings of Cairo. Its outside walls are plain and ugly, its dome squat, and its lofty minaret lacks proportion; whilst the internal ornamentation is scant and coarse. To my mind the mosques of Kâït Bey,—that near Ibn-Tûlûn, and the tomb-mosque in the Eastern Cemetery,—are far more beautiful. In them we see arabesque decoration in its prime. Kâït Bey was *par excellence* the royal builder of Cairo. In all parts of the city one meets with his well-known medallion—the circle inscribed on the wall, with his name and titles and a bene-

* E. T. Rogers and Miss Rogers, in *The Art Journal*, 1880, pp. 77-79.

diction, arranged about a broad fess. From the fine Wekâla, near the Gate of Victory on the north, to the Gate of Sitta Nefîsa on the south, noble buildings of all descriptions testify to the munificence and artistic taste of this Mamlûk Sultan of the fourteenth century. Foremost among his secular edifices stands the great Wekâla, or hostelry, near the Azhar, the whole front of which is

ORNAMENT FROM THE WEKÂLA OF KÂÏT BEY.

covered with delicate arabesque tracery. But Kâït Bey's *chefs-d'œuvre* are his two mosques, of which it is difficult to say which is the more perfect. The outward appearance of his tomb-mosque in the Eastern Cemetery is, perhaps, unrivalled among the monuments of Saracenic art in Egypt. The geometrical tracery over leafy scrollwork upon the exquisite fawn-coloured

dome, and the graceful balconied minaret, one hundred and sixty-four feet high, have ever excited the enthusiasm of travellers.

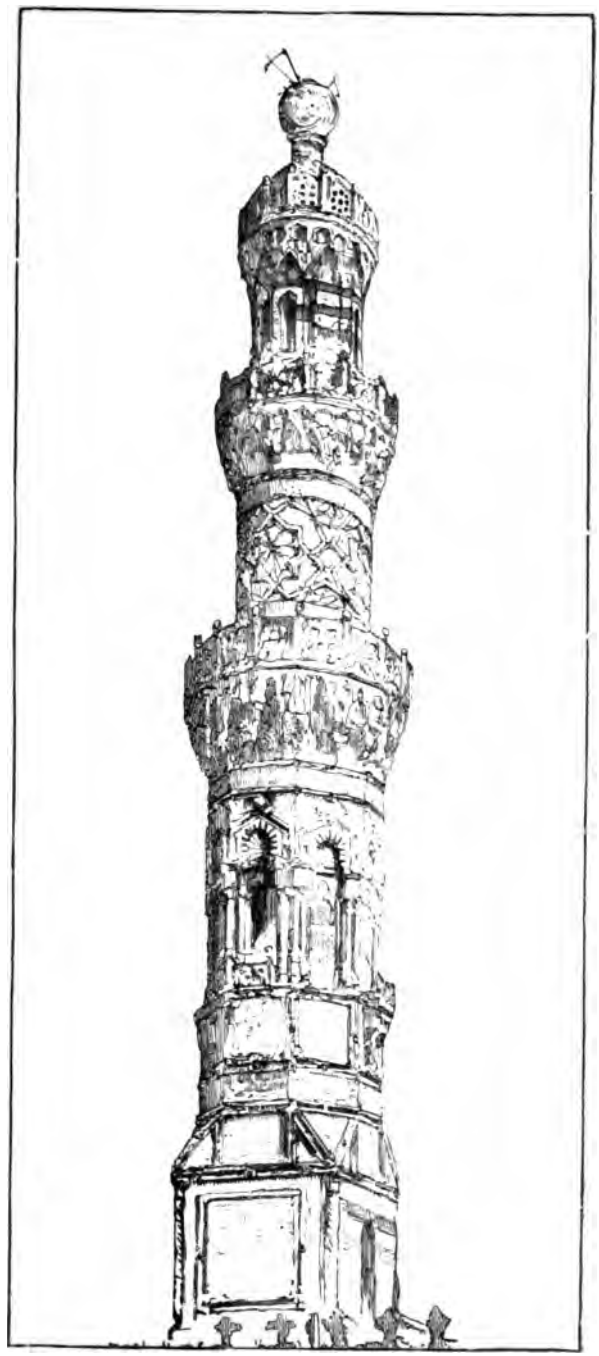
DOME OF THE MOSQUE OF KÂÏT BEY, IN THE EASTERN CEMETERY.

The interior, however, is comparatively plain, and in this respect Kâït Bey's other mosque, in the neighbourhood of Ibn-Tûlûn, un-

doubtedly bears away the palm, whilst in outer appearance it stands but little inferior to its sister in the Eastern Cemetery. "The dome is decorated with an intricate tracery of strap-work; stars of eight points, deeply cut at regular intervals, evidently form the foundation of the design. The minaret, with its balconies rising one above the other, is especially elegant. It is square at the base, and is converted into an octagon simply by cutting away the corners. On four sides of this octagon there are trefoil arched doorways, with boldly projecting bases, supported on twin brackets. Above the first continuous balcony the minaret is cylindrical, and its surface is decorated with a design resembling that on the dome. Above the next balcony the minaret is encircled by pilasters, supporting the brackets of the highest balcony." * Many of the Mamlûk tomb-mosques, which rise among the simple head and foot stones of the humbler white graves, follow the style of Kâït Bey's mosques, though others exhibit less graceful zig-zag or ribbed domes.

Chief among the points for ornamentation in the mosques of Cairo are the eastern niche, or chancel, the doors, windows, and lamps; sometimes the walls are decorated, and occasionally the pavement. The last is generally of plain white stone, but sometimes, by accident rather than of design, carved marble slabs are let into the paving; as in the mosque of Suyurghatmish, where the beautiful slabs in the entrance and the open court were assuredly not originally designed for people's feet. The walls, again, are probably the least cared-for parts of the mosque; a coat of whitewash answers most purposes, except those of art, and with whitewash the worshippers are content. But the *liwân*, or eastern recess (corresponding to the chancel of our churches) is generally decorated with a dado of marble mosaic, and is sometimes faced with blue and white tiles on the principal wall. These marbles and tiles are often exceedingly beautiful. The mosaics are of fine design and workmanship; but time and neglect have left few perfect specimens, and in many of the mosques their fragments

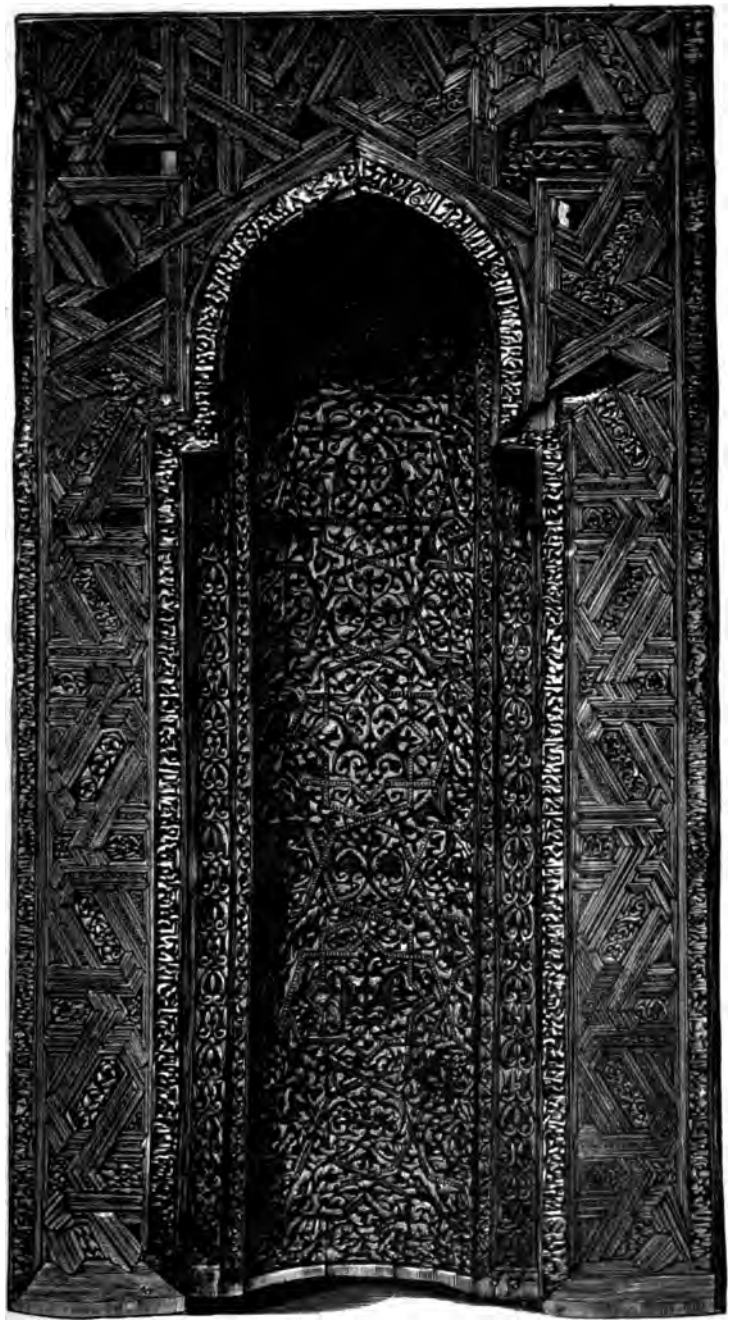
* E. T. Rogers and Miss Rogers, in *The Art Journal*, 1880, p. 80.



MINARET OF THE MOSQUE OF KÂÏT BEY.

strew the floor, or have partially disappeared. The tomb-mosque of Kalaûn, however, among others, preserves its admirable decorations. The finest example of a tiled *îwân* is in the mosque of Aksunkur, restored by Ibrahîm Aga, where the whole eastern wall is one expanse of blue and white tiles with here and there a touch of Rhodian red. Some of the tiles unite to form a large design of trees, especially cypresses, with representations of swinging lamps between them; others are of the branching leaf pattern; but uniformity, or even harmony, is the last thing that enters the mind of the mosque restorer. He finds the tiles, some in their places, some fallen, some vanished, and he replaces and adds to them with a single-minded view of filling up the space. Border tiles are stuck upright side by side, and a so-called Rhodian piece is introduced in the very middle of an arrangement in blue. The niche, or *mihrâb*, which indicates the direction of Mekka, towards which the worshipper must pray, is generally adorned with beautiful mosaics of marble and mother-of-pearl, and with sculptured miniature arcades in high relief. Sometimes, however, the niche is of carved wood, as in the case of the mihrâb from the mosque of Sitta Nefîsa, now in the Museum of Arab Art.

Very exquisite work is bestowed upon the doors of the mosques. No one who has been to Cairo has failed to be struck with the magnificent bronze-plated doors of Sultan Hasan and other mosques. though the neglect and depredations that have aided the ruin of monuments have deprived these splendid gates of much of their perfection; the bronze plates are often partially torn off, beautifully worked hinges are gone, and dirt and ill-usage have everywhere left their traces. There is another kind of door, made entirely of wood, which is sometimes seen within the *îwân*, or sanctuary, and is generally used to close the chambers or cupboards where the mosque properties are kept. Sometimes these inner doors are composed of large panels of plain wood, divided by other panels carved over with arabesques and geometrical patterns. There is, moreover, a third and singularly beautiful kind of door, in which the large panels are filled up with exquisite geometrical



NICHE FROM THE MOSQUE OF SITTA NEFÎSA. (*Museum of Arab Art.*)

mosaics, formed by small carved pieces of coloured wood, ivory, and ebony, producing a very rich effect.

A very beautiful style of wood-carving is also sometimes employed to adorn the tombs of the mosque founders. The best specimen of a carved tomb in Cairo is that of Es-Sâlih Ayyûb, the grandnephew of Saladin, in his ruined mosque in the Sûk En-Nahhâsîn. A similar style of carving is employed for the pulpit, a fine specimen of which, one of Kâït Bey's, is in the South Kensington Museum. The pulpit in the tomb-mosque of Barkûk is of stone, carved in exquisite geometrical patterns; and that of Sultan Hasan is of marble.

The mosque windows, or *kamariyas*, "moonlights," as they are called in Arabic, are generally placed high up, and are made of stucco, with little pieces of coloured glass inserted so as to form a geometrical or floral pattern. They are by no means of uniform merit, either in design or in the quality of the glass. The latter never attains to the beauty of our old stained glass, but the more ancient specimens show rich and subdued colours which the later artists failed to produce; and the general effect of the light coming through the little deep-toned panes is singularly beautiful.

The lamps with which the larger mosques were formerly lighted are among the most remarkable products of Arab Art. Sometimes they consist of large chandeliers; but the usual mosque-lamp was of enamelled glass of various colours, and was about a foot high and nine inches in diameter. These lamps have become exceedingly rare, and over £200 has recently been given for a defective specimen. A few fine examples may be seen at the British Museum and at South Kensington, and a magnificent collection is exhibited in the Museum of Arab Art at Cairo. Once, no doubt, they hung in every large mosque, but now those which are open at night are lighted by diminutive and by no means artistic oil-lamps of common glass, which certainly shed a dim, and possibly a religious, light over the worshippers. The mosque guardians probably discovered the value of the enamelled lamps, and disposed of them to European collectors. At any rate they have disappeared

from the mosques, and only in one instance did I see any lamps of the old pattern still hanging from the wooden brackets which jut out round the interior of every mosque to support them. Without these beautiful accessories it is difficult to realize the splendour of a Muslim church in the glow of a midnight ceremony.

CHAPTER III

THE MAMLÛKS

THE majority of the mosques of Cairo that still survive were founded by the Mamlûk Sultans, who, after a manner, governed Egypt from 1250 to 1517. During the six centuries that had passed since the day when the Arab general 'Amr besieged and took Alexandria and planted his capital of Fustât on the site of his victorious camp (641), a gross of one hundred and forty-four Governors had adminstered the province of Egypt, or had raised it to the rank of an independent kingdom.* Few of them have left monuments in Cairo that have survived to this day, but among these few Ibn-Tûlûn, the Fâtimis, and Saladin were pre-eminent.

Ahmad Ibn-Tûlûn was a Turk from beyond the Oxus, who entered the service of the Khalif of Baghdâd, and was appointed Governor of Egypt in 868. In the following year, he made himself independent, and founded a dynasty, which lasted, however, but thirty-six years. He built the new suburb of Katâi', or "the Wards," to accommodate his 30,000 troops, and its streets were full of splendid houses. But the glory of Katâi' was the mosque of Ibn-Tûlûn, the first undoubted and unaltered example of true Saracenic art in Egypt, and one of the noblest monuments in the East. There was also a stately palace, with a *meydân* or race-course attached, where the Sultan and his courtiers played at polo. One of the many splendid gates of this meydân was called the "Gate of Lions," because it was surmounted by two lions in

* See the Chronological Table at the beginning of this volume.

STREET IN MASR EL-'ATÎKA, OLD CAIRO.

plaster; another was called the Sâg gate, since it was made of that wood. Around rose the handsome palaces of the generals; the mosques and the baths; the windmills and brick-kilns; the great hospital; the markets for the assayers, perfumers, cloth merchants, fruiterers, cooks, and other trades, all well built and densely populated. The palace, mosque, race-course, and hospital together cost a sum of nearly 300,000 dînârs of gold; and the annual revenue from taxes, to meet this vast outlay and the expenses of government, was placed at 4,300,000 dînârs. To which fact may be added the instructive comment that at the time of Ahmad's death no less than 18,000 persons were found in the prisons. His son Khumâraweyh, who succeeded in 883, carried this passion of splendid luxury to its height. He turned the meydân into a garden, filled with lilies, gilliflowers, saffron, and palm-trees of all sorts, the trunks of which he coated with copper gilt, behind which leaden pipes supplied fountains which gushed forth to water the garden. In the midst rose an aviary-tower of sâg wood; the walls were carved with figures and painted with various colours. Peacocks, guinea-fowl, doves and pigeons, with rare birds from Nubia, had their home in the garden and aviary. There was also a menagerie, and especially a blue-eyed lion who crouched beside his master when he sat at table, and guarded him when he slept. In the palace, Khumâraweyh built the "Golden Hall," the walls whereof were covered with gold and azure, in admirable designs, and varied by bas-reliefs of himself and his wives (if we are to credit the historians), and even of the *prime donne* of the court. They were carved in wood, life-size, and painted with exquisite art, so that the folds of the drapery seemed natural; they wore crowns of real gold and turbans set with precious stones, and jewelled earrings. But the chief wonder of Khumâraweyh's palace was a lake of quicksilver, on the surface of which lay a leather bed inflated with air, fastened by silk bands to four silver supports at the corners; for the king was a martyr to insomnia, and on this elastic bed alone could he successfully woo sleep. Of all these marvels, and the splendid harîm rooms, the

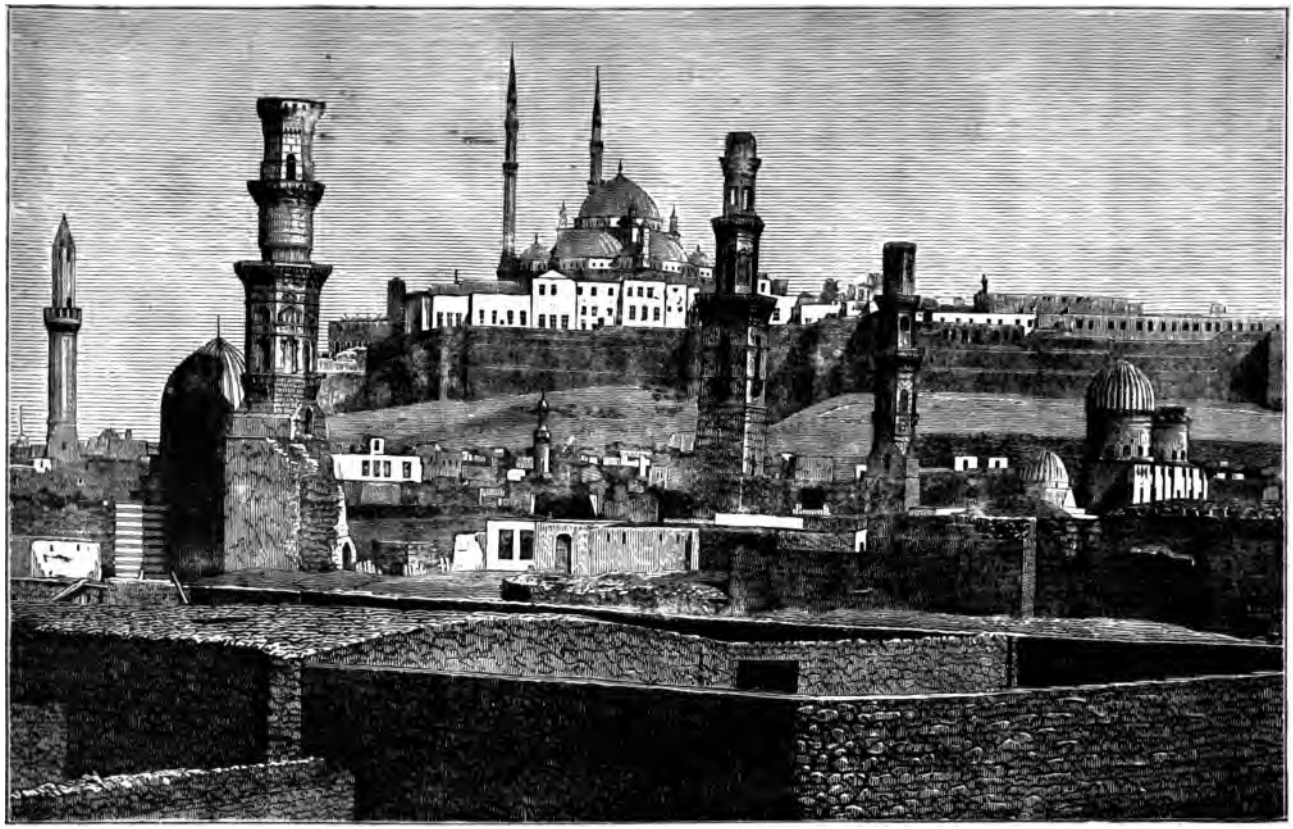
spacious stables, the furniture, wine-cups, rich silk robes, inlaid swords, and shields of steel, nothing has come down to us. We are obliged to take the mosque of Ibn-Tûlûn as sole witness to the consummate luxury and artistic eminence of the period.

After the fall of the dynasty of Tûlûn, owing to the weakness of the later members of the family, who paid the common penalty of their Capua, governors appointed by the Khalifs once more exercised their monotonous sway over Egypt. In 935 El-Ikhshîd made himself independent ruler of both Egypt and Syria, but he left no great works behind him, nor did his dynasty contribute to the monuments of the Saracens. His two sons were under the tutorship of the eunuch Abu-l-Misk Kâfûr, "Father of Musk, Camphor," who ruled the kingdom well, kept a generous open table, where 1,700 pounds of meat were consumed daily, but was unable to resist the invasion of the heretical Fâtimy Khalif, El-Mo'izz, who conquered Egypt in 969, and Syria in the following year, and also annexed the Arabian provinces of the Higâz and the Yemen. We have seen how these Shi'ah Khalifs laid the nucleus of Cairo in their fortified palace of *Kâhira*. Unfortunately, beyond the mosques of the Azhar and El-Hâkim, built in 971 and 990, the later one of Talâi' ibn Ruzeyk, and a fragment here and there, little remains of the splendour ascribed to these celebrated rulers. It is related that when Rashida, daughter of the Khalif El-Mo'izz, died, she left an inheritance valued at 2,700,000 pieces of gold; in her house were 12,000 robes of various colours. About the same time her sister 'Abda also died and left an immense fortune. Forty pounds of wax were needed to put seals on her rooms and coffer. Among her treasures were 3,000 vases of silver, enamelled and chased; 400 swords damascened in gold; 30,000 pieces of Sicilian stuff; quantities of emeralds, rubies, and other precious stones; 90 basins and 90 ewers of purest crystal, &c. Indeed, the Fâtimis even surpassed Ibn-Tûlûn in magnificence and the encouragement of every branch of art, and to them, more perhaps than to any other Eastern dynasty, we owe the introduction of Saracenic design into southern Europe. The Mohammedan

Amîrs of Sicily, who left so rich a legacy of art to the Norman kings, were vassals of the Fâtimy Khalifs.

How Saladin—or, to be accurate, Salâh-ed-dîn Yûsuf, son of Ayyûb—was despatched to Egypt with the troops of Nûr-ed-dîn, Sultan of Damascus, to support the cause of one of those powerful vizîrs who by their arrogance and rivalry had prepared the downfall of the Egyptian Government, and how the brilliant young soldier and statesman soon found his way to depose the last of the Fâtimy Khalifs and assume the supreme authority himself, are almost matters of European history. The period of Ayyûby rule from 1171, when the prayers were ordered to be said no longer in the name of the heretical pontiff, but in that of the Khalif of Baghdâd, the orthodox head of Islâm, to the year 1250, when the sovereignty descended to the Mamlûks, falls within a century, but it was filled with wars and deeds that have made this period known to English readers. El-Mo'izz the Fâtimy had changed Egypt from a province into a kingdom with a definite political significance; Saladin transformed the kingdom into a powerful empire. The long struggle with the Crusaders, the victory of Tiberias, the conquest of Jerusalem, the well-known treaty with Richard Cœur de Lion, though most familiar to us, form but a part of Saladin's exploits. He made his power felt far beyond the borders of Palestine; his arm triumphed over hosts of valiant princes to the banks of the Tigris, and when he died, in 1193, at the age of 57, he left to his sons and kinsmen, not only the example of the most chivalrous, honourable, and magnanimous of kings, but substantial legacies of rich provinces, extending from Aleppo and Mesopotamia to Arabia and the Country of the Blacks.

Saladin combined in a marked degree the genius for war with the love of the beautiful. The third wall, and the Citadel of Cairo, with its magnificent buildings, now alas destroyed, bore witness to his encouragement of architecture. The Citadel was begun in 1176, with materials obtained from some of the smaller pyramids of Gîza, and so strongly and carefully was it constructed that when Saladin died, the fortress was not yet completed, but re-



THE CITADEL, FROM THE TOMBS OF THE MAMLÛKS.

mained unfinished until 1207. The eunuch Karâkûsh, "Black Eagle," was entrusted with the superintendence of the work, and this may account for the sculpture of an eagle on the Citadel wall. The present massive gate on the Rumeyla, within which is the passage where the massacre of the last descendants of the Mamlûks by Mohammed 'Aly took place in 1811, is an eighteenth-century work, but part of the walls and some of the towers belong to Saladin's castle, which seems to have included only a portion of the present fortress. Of the mosque and palace, however, no trace remains. The so-called "Hall of Joseph," or *Kasr Yûsuf*, pulled down about 1830, was really the *Dâr-el-'Adl*, or "Hall of Justice," of the Mamlûk Sultan En-Nâsir, more than a century later. The deep well with its massive masonry is, however, attributed to Saladin, and there used to be ruins of a solid and beautifully decorated mansion which was known, rightly or not, as the "House of Salâh-ed-dîn Yûsuf."

Saladin's empire needed a strong hand to keep it united, and the number of relations, sons and nephews, who demanded their share of his wide provinces, rendered the survival of the Ayyûby dominion precarious. Saladin's brother, El-'Adil Seyf-ed-dîn, the "Saphadin" of the Crusades, controlled the centrifugal tendencies of his kindred for a while, and his son El-Kâmil gloriously defeated Jean de Brienne on the spot where the commemorative city of El-Mansûra, "the Victorious," was afterwards erected by the conqueror. After his death, in 1237, however, the forces which made for disintegration became too strong to be resisted; various petty dynasties of the Ayyûby family were temporarily established in the chief provinces, only to make way shortly for the Tartars, and in Egypt and Syria notably for the Mamlûks, who in 1250 succeeded to the glories of Saladin.

The word *Mamlûk* means "owned," and is applied to white slaves, acquired by capture in war or purchase in the market. The Egyptian Mamlûks were originally white slaves, imported for the protection of the Ayyûby Es-Sâlih against his kinsmen and the Franks, and who presently acquired the power and the govern-

MOSQUE ON MOUNT MUKATTAM, BEHIND THE CITADEL.

ment of Egypt. They were reinforced from time to time by fresh purchases, for the climate of Egypt was unfavourable to the fertility of foreign immigrants, and the stock had to be refreshed from outside. Es-Sâlih's Mamlûks were loyal servants; they defended his kingdom while he lived, and it was their brilliant charge under Beybars that routed the French army and brought about the capture of St. Louis himself. Es-Sâlih's son was a drunken debauchee, and helpless to meet the difficulties in which his kingdom was involved. In circumstances that hardly left an alternative, he was put out of the way, and a lady, named Sheger-ed-durr, "Tree of Pearls," ascended the throne of her late husband and master, as the first Slave Monarch of Mohammedan Egypt. Her rule was but brief; jealousy led her to murder the Mamlûk chief Aybek, whom she married for political reasons, and she paid the penalty of her crime by being herself beaten to death with the bath-clogs of some female slaves who sympathized with her rival. After her death began that singular succession of Mamlûk Sultans, which lasted, in spite of special tendencies to dissolution, for two hundred and seventy-five years.

The external history of these years is monotonous. Wars to repel the invasions of the Tartars or to drive the Christians from the Holy Land, struggles between rival claimants to the throne, embassies to and from foreign powers, including France and Venice, the Khan of Persia, and the King of Abyssinia, constitute the staple of foreign affairs. To enumerate the events of each reign, or even the names of the fifty Mamlûks who sat on the throne at Cairo, would be wearisome and unprofitable to the reader. But it is different with the internal affairs of the Mamlûk period. In this flowering time of Saracenic art, a real interest belongs to the life and social condition of the people who made and encouraged the finest productions of the Oriental artist. History can show few more startling contrasts than that offered by the spectacle of a band of disorderly soldiers, to all appearance barbarians, prone to shed blood, merciless to their enemies, tyrannous to their subjects, yet delighting in the delicate re-

TOMB OF A MAMLÚK, IN THE KERÁFA.

finements which art could afford them in their home life, lavish in the endowment of pious foundations, magnificent in their mosques and palaces, and fastidious in the smallest details of dress and furniture. Allowing all that must be allowed for the passion of the barbarian for display, we are still far from an explanation how the Tartars chanced to be the noblest promoters of art, of literature, and of public works, that Egypt had known since the days of the Ptolemies.

During this brilliant period the population of Egypt was sharply divided into two classes, who had little in common with each other. One was that of the Mamlûks, or military oligarchy, the other the mass of the Egyptians. The latter were useful for cultivating the land, paying the taxes which supported the Mamlûks, and manufacturing their robes, but beyond these functions, and that of supplying the judicial and religious posts of the empire, they had small part in the business of the state, and appear to have been very seldom incorporated into the ranks of their foreign masters. The names of the Mamlûks that have descended to us in the accurate and detailed pages of El-Makrîzy are generally Tartar or Turkish, and even when they are ordinary Arabic names, they were borne by Tartars who had put on an Arabic name along with the speech, dress, and country of their adoption. In the glories, military and ceremonial, of the Mamlûks the people had no part. They were indeed thankful when a mild sovereign, like Lâgîn, ascended the throne, and when taxes were reduced and bakhshîsh distributed; and they would join, like all populaces, in the decoration of the streets and public rejoicings, when the Sultan came back from a career of conquest, or recovered from an illness; but they had no voice in the government of the country, and must make the best they might of the uncertain characters of their ever-changing rulers.

Before Es-Sâlih's death a certain number of his Mamlûks had risen from the ranks of common slaves to posts of honour at their master's court; they had become cup-bearers, or tasters, or masters of the horse to his majesty, and had been rewarded by enfranchise-

ment; and these freed Mamlûks became in turn masters and owners of other Mamlûks. Thus at the very beginning of Mamlûk history we find a number of powerful *Amîrs* or lords, who had risen from the ranks of the slaves and in turn become the owners of a large body of retainers, whom they led to battle, or by whose aid they aspired to ascend the throne. The only title to kingship among these nobles was personal prowess and the command of the largest number of adherents. In the absence of other influences the hereditary principle was no doubt adopted, and we find one family, that of Kalaûn, maintaining its succession to the throne for several generations. But as a rule the successor to the kingly power was the most powerful lord of the day, and his hold on the throne depended chiefly on the strength of his following, and his conciliation of the other nobles. The annals of Mamlûk dominion are full of instances of a great lord reducing the authority of the reigning Sultan to a shadow, and then stepping over his murdered body to the throne. Most of the Mamlûks died violent deaths at the hands of rival Amîrs, and the safety of the ruler of the time depended mainly upon the numbers and courage of his guard. This bodyguard enjoyed remarkable privileges, and was the object of continual solicitude on the part of the Sultan. As his own safety and power depended upon their fidelity, he was accustomed to bestow upon them grants of lands, rich dresses of honour, and unstinted largesse. A great part of the land of Egypt was held by the soldiers of the guard in feofs granted by the crown; and the Amîrs who commanded them, nobles specially attached to the Sultan, and generally promoted from among his own Mamlûks, received handsome appanages. These soldiers of the guard numbered several thousand, and must have passed from Sultan to Sultan at every change of ruler; their colonels, or "Amîrs over a Thousand," as they were called, became important factors in the choice of rulers, and often deposed or set up a Sultan as seemed good to them. The Sultan, or chief Mamlûk, was in fact more or less, according to his character, at the mercy of the officers of his guard; and the principal check he

possessed upon their ambition or discontent was found in their own mutual jealousies, which might be played upon so as to neutralize their opposition.

MINARET OF A MAMLÛK MOSQUE.

Each of the great lords, were he an officer of the guard, or a court official, or merely a private nobleman, was a Mamlûk Sultan in miniature. He, too, had his guard of Mamlûk slaves, who waited at his door to escort him in his rides abroad, were ready at his behest to attack the public baths and carry off the women, defended him when a rival lord besieged his palace, and followed him valiantly as he led the charge of his division on the field of battle. These great lords, with their retainers, were a constant menace to the reigning Sultan. A coalition would be formed among a certain number of disaffected nobles, with the support of some of the officers of the house-

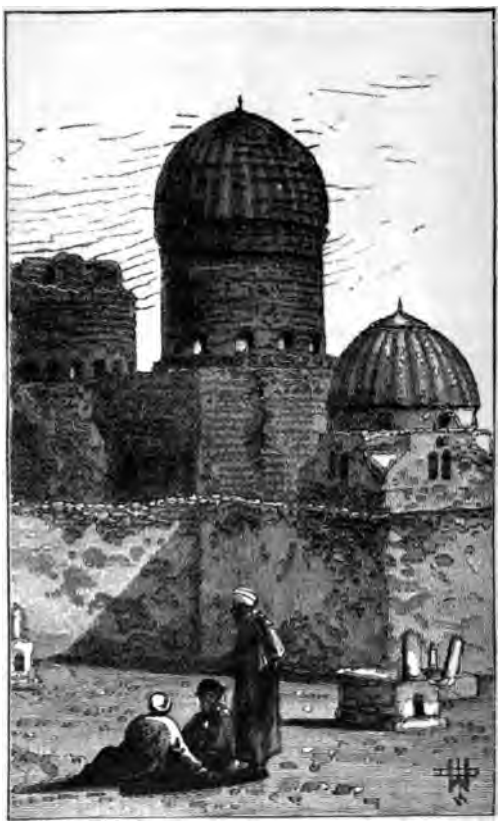
hold and of the guard, and their retainers would mass in the approaches to the royal presence, while a trusted cup-bearer or other officer, whose duties permitted him access to the king's person, would strike the fatal blow; and the conspirators would forthwith elect one of their number to succeed to the vacant throne. This was not effected without a struggle; the royal guard was not always to be bribed or overcome, and there were generally other nobles whose interests attached them to the reigning sovereign rather than to any possible successor, except themselves, and who would be sure to oppose the plot. Then there would be a street fight; the terrified people would close their shops, run to their houses, and shut the great gates which isolated the various quarters and markets of the city; and the rival factions of Mamlûks would ride through the streets that remained open, pillaging the houses of their adversaries, carrying off women and children, holding pitched battles in the road, and discharging arrows and spears from the windows upon the enemy in the street below. These things were of constant occurrence, and the life of the merchant classes of Cairo must have been sufficiently exciting. We read how the great bazar, called the Khân El-Khalîly, was sometimes shut up for a week while these contests were going on in the streets without, and the rich merchants of Cairo huddled trembling within the stout gates.

The contest over, and a new Sultan set on the throne, there remained the further difficulty of staying there. "J'y suis" was a much easier thing to say in Egypt than "j'y reste." The same method that raised him to power might set him down again. An example, drawn from the annals of the thirteenth century, will show, better than any generalizations, the uncertain tenure of power among the fickle military oligarchy of the Mamlûks. In 1293, En-Nâsir Mohammed was raised to the throne, which had been occupied by his father Kalaûn and his brother Khalîl. En-Nâsir was a mere child, nine years old, and the real authority devolved on his Vizîr Ketbugha. Naturally there were several other nobles who envied Ketbugha his position of influence and

authority; and one of these, Shugay, taking the lead, offered armed resistance to the authority of the Viceroy. Ketbugha's Mamlûks used to assemble at the gate of the Citadel to defend him in his progress through the city, and Shugay, with his retainers, would waylay the vice-regal *cortège* as it rode through the narrow streets, and bloody conflicts ensued. The gates of the city were kept closed, and the markets were deserted, until at length Shugay was captured, and his head was paraded on a spike through the streets of Cairo. But disaffection was not quelled by the slaughter of Shugay and his followers. There dwelt a body of 300 Mamlûks called Ashrafy* (after their master El-Ashraf Khalîl) in the quarter of Cairo called El-Kebsh, and these warriors, finding their occupation gone by the murder of their master, made an attempt to seize the sovereign power. They assembled and went to the royal stables at the foot of the Citadel, and thence to the armourers' market, plundering and destroying on their way, and eventually they encamped at the gate of the Citadel, and laid siege to the fortress. Whereupon Ketbugha's immediate supporters mounted their horses and rode down to meet them. The Ashrafis were dispersed, and given over to various horrible tortures—blinded,

* It will be useful here to explain the system of Mamlûk names and titles. Every Mamlûk had (1) a proper name, such as Ketbugha, Lâgîn, Beybars, Kalaûn, generally of Tartar derivation; (2) a surname or honourable epithet, as Husâm-ed-dîn, "Sword-blade of the Faith," Nûr-ed-dîn, "Light of the Faith," Nâsir-ed-din, "Succourer of the Faith;" (3) generally a pseudo-patronymic, as Abu-l-Feth, "Father of Victory," Abu-n-Nasr, "Father of Succour;" (4) if a Sultan, an epithet affixed to the title of Sultan or King, as El-Melik Es-Sa'îd, "The Fortunate King," El-Melik En-Nâsir, "The Triumphant King," El-Melik El-Mansûr, "The Victorious King;" (5) a title of possession, implying by its relative termination *y* or *i*, that the subject has been owned as a slave (or has been employed as an officer or retainer) by some Sultan or Lord, as El-Ashrafy, "The Slave or Mamlûk of the Sultan El-Ashraf," El-Mansûry, "The Mamlûk of the Sultan El-Mansûr." The order of these titles was as follows: first the royal title, then the honourable surname, third the patronymic, fourth the proper name, and last the possessive: as Es-Sultân El-Melik El-Mansûr Husâm-ed-dîn Abu-l-Feth Lâgîn El Mansûry, "The Sultan, Victorious King, Sword-blade of the Faith, Father of Victory. Lâgîn, Mamlûk of the Sultan El-Mansûr." It is usual, in abbreviating these numerous names, to style a Sultan by his title, El-Mansûr, &c., or by his proper name, Lâgîn, &c., omitting the rest, while a Noble (Amîr) is conveniently denoted by his proper name alone. It may be added that the word *ibn*, of frequent occurrence in these pages, means "son"; as, Ahmad ibn Tûlûn, "Son of Tûlûn."

maimed, drowned, beheaded, and hanged, or nailed to the city gate Zuweyla—and only a few were so far spared that they were allotted as slaves to their conquerors. Thus the rebellion was put down; but the next day, the Viceroy Ketbugha, calling a council of the great nobles of the Court, protested that such exhibitions were dishonourable to the kingly state, and that the dignity of Sultan would be irreparably compromised if a child like En-Nâsir were any longer suffered to occupy the throne. The child was therefore sent away to grow up, and Ketbugha, as a matter of course, assumed the sceptre of his ward. This was in 1295; but in the end of 1296, on his return from a journey to Syria, the new Sultan had the misfortune to excite the latent jealousy of some of the powerful nobles who accompanied him; his tent was attacked; his guards and Mamlûks, by a devoted resistance, succeeded in enabling their master to fly; and the leader of the rebellion, Lâgîn, was forthwith chosen Sultan in his stead.



MAMLÛK TOMB-MOSQUE.

Husâm-ed-dîn Lâgîn, who now ascended the throne under the title of El-Mansûr, had originally been a slave of El-Mansûr 'Aly,

A MINARET IN THE KERÂFA.

son of Aybek (whence he was called El-Mansûry), and had then been bought for the trifling sum of about £30 by Kalaûn, under whom he rose from the grade of page to that of *silâhdâr*, or armour-bearer; and Kalaûn, coming to the throne, gave him the rank of Amîr, and made him the governor of Damascus. Kalaûn's son Khalîl, on succeeding to the sovereignty, cast Lâgîn into prison, and in return for this treatment Lâgîn assisted in his murder. During the brief reign of Ketbugha, he held the highest office in the land, that of Viceroy (*Nâib-es-Saltana*), and now he had turned against his latest lord, and had seized the crown for himself. The terms of his election throw an interesting light upon the precarious authority of the Mamlûk Sultans. His fellow-conspirators, after the flight of Ketbugha, marched at Lâgîn's stirrup, hailed him Sultan, and paid him homage; but they exacted as a condition of their fealty that the new monarch should continue as one of

themselves, do nothing without their advice, and never show undue favour towards his own Mamlûks. This he swore; but so suspicious were they of his good faith, that they made him swear it again, openly hinting that when he was once instated he would break his vow and favour his own followers, to the injury of the nobles who had raised him to the throne. When this had been satisfactorily arranged, Es-Sultân El-Melik El-Mansûr Husâm-ed-dîn Lâgîn, "The Sultan, Victorious King, Sword-blade of the Faith, Lâgîn," rode on to Cairo, attended by the insignia of sovereignty, with the royal parasol borne over his head by the great Lord Beysary; the prayers were said in his name in the mosques, drums were beaten in the towns he passed through; the nobles of Cairo came out to do him fealty; and, escorted by a crowd

TOMBS OF THE MAMLÛKS.

of lords and officers, he rode to the Citadel, displayed himself as Sultan to the people in the Hippodrome, and made his royal progress through the streets from the Citadel to the Gate of Victory. The 'Abbâsy Khalif of Egypt, a poor relic of the ancient house of Baghdâd, rode at his side; and before them was carried the Khalif's diploma of investiture, without which very nominal authority no Sultan in those days would have considered his coronation complete. The streets were decorated with precious silks and arms, and great was the popular rejoicing; for the benevolence and generosity of Lâgîn made him a favourite with the people, and he had already promised to remit the balance of the year's taxes, and had even vowed that if he lived there should not be a single tax left. The price of food, which had risen to famine height during the late disturbances, now fell fifty per cent.; bread was cheap, and the Sultan was naturally adored.

In spite of his share in a royal murder and a treacherous usurpation, this Mamlûk Sultan seems to have deserved the affection of his subjects. Not only did he relieve the people from much of the pressure of unjust and arbitrary taxation under which they had groaned, but he abstained, at least until he fell under the influence of another mind, from the tyrannical imprisonments and tortures by which the rule of the Mamlûks was too commonly secured. His conduct to his rivals was clement to a degree hardly paralleled among the princes of his time. He did not attempt to destroy the ex-Sultan Ketbugha, but gave him a small government in Syria by way of compensation. The child En-Nâsir had nothing to fear from Lâgîn, who invited him to return to Egypt, and told him that, as the Mamlûk of the boy's father, Kalaûn, he only regarded himself as his representative, holding the throne until En-Nâsir should be old enough to assume the government himself. Lâgîn was zealous in good works, gave alms largely in secret, and founded many charitable endowments. Among his services to art must be mentioned his restoration of the mosque of Ibn-Tûlûn, at a cost of £10,000, to which he was impelled by the circumstance that he had found refuge in the

then deserted building during the pursuit which followed the murder of Khalîl. Hidden in the neglected chambers and arcades of the old mosque, where so few worshippers repaired that but a single lamp was lighted before the niche at night, and the mueddin deigned to come no further than the threshold to chant the call to prayer, Lâgîn vowed that he would repay his preservation by repairing the mosque that had sheltered him.* Such good deeds, and the magnanimous release of many prisoners, and, not least, a bold foreign policy, as when he sent an army to capture towns on the distant borders of Armenia, could not fail to endear him to the populace; and after he was confined to the Citadel for two months with injuries resulting from a fall at polo, the rejoicings on his return to public life were genuine and universal. All the streets were decorated with silks and satins, the shops and windows were hired by sightseers, eager to catch a glimpse of the Sultan, and drums were beaten during his state progress through the capital. He celebrated the occasion by giving a number of robes of honour to the chief lords, freeing captives, and distributing alms to the poor. His private life commended him to the good Mohammedans of Cairo; for although in his youth he had been a wine-bibber, gambler, and given over to the chase, when he ascended the throne he became austere in his practice, fasted two months in the year besides Ramadân, affected the society of good pious Kâdis and the like, was plain in his dress, as the Prophet ordains that a Muslim should be, and strict in enforcing simplicity among his followers. His ruddy complexion and blue eyes, together with a tall and imposing figure, indeed marked the foreigner, but his habits were orthodoxy itself; he bastinadoed drunkards, even if they were nobles; and his immoderate eating was not necessarily wicked.

But Lâgîn, with all his virtues, had a weakness, too common among Mamlûk sovereigns; he was weakly attached to one of his retainers, named Mangûtîmûr, and by degrees suffered him-

* It is interesting to know that the panels of the pulpit, which, with a cupola over the niche, formed the chief additions (beyond mere repairs) that Lâgîn made to the mosque, are now in the South Kensington Museum. See my *Art of the Saracens of Egypt*, figs. 35—8.

self to be led by this favourite where his better judgment would never have allowed him to stray. Mangûtîmûr's oppressions were not tamely endured by the Amîrs; but it was no light thing to risk the horrors of incarceration in the Citadel dungeon, a noisome pit, where foul and deadly exhalations, unclean vermin, and bats, rendered the pitchy darkness more horrible, and where for nearly half a century it was the practice to incarcerate refractory nobles, until, in 1329, En-Nâsir had the dreaded hole filled up. At length a combination was formed; Lâgîn was treacherously murdered as he was in the act of rising to say the evening prayers, and immediately afterwards Mangûtîmûr was entrapped. He was for the moment consigned to the pit under the Citadel; but the Amîr who had dealt the fatal stroke to Lâgîn arrived on the scene, and crying with a strident voice, "What had the Sultan done that I should kill him? By God, I never had aught but benefits from him; he brought me up, and gave me my steps of promotion. Had I known that when the Sultan was dead this Mangûtîmûr would still be living, I would never have done this murder, for it was Mangûtîmûr's acts that led me to the deed." So saying, he plunged into the dungeon, slew the hated favourite with his own hands, and delivered his house over to the soldiers to pillage.

This sketch of a few years of Mamlûk history will serve to show the perils that surrounded the kingly state. It is a fair sample of the whole history, although now and again a sovereign would ascend the throne whose personal qualities or diplomatic talents succeeded in keeping the reins of government in his hands for a considerable period. The uncertainty of the tenure of power, and the general brevity of their reigns (they average about five years and a half), make it the more astonishing that they should have found leisure to promote the many noble works of architecture and engineering which distinguish their rule above any other period of Egyptian history since the Christian era. The Sultan's office was indeed no sinecure, apart from the constant watchfulness needed to manage the refractory Mamlûks. Two days a week

did Lâgîn devote to sitting in the Hall of Justice and hearing any complaints that his subjects might bring before him, in addition to those petitions which were constantly presented to him as he rode through the city. The correspondence of the empire, again, was no light matter, and most of the Sultans took a personal share in drawing up the despatches. Beybars had established a well-organized system of posts, connecting every part of his wide dominions with the capital. Relays of horses were in readiness at each posting-house, and twice a week the Sultan received and answered reports from all parts of the realm. Besides the ordinary mail, there was also a pigeon post, which was no less carefully managed. The pigeons were kept in cots in the Citadel and at the various stages, which were further apart than those of the horses; the bird was trained to stop at the first post-cot, where its letter would be attached to the wing of another pigeon for the next stage. The royal pigeons had a distinguishing mark, and when one of these arrived at the Citadel with a despatch, none was permitted to detach the parchment save the Sultan himself; and so stringent were the rules, that were he dining or sleeping or absorbed in polo, he would nevertheless at once be informed of the arrival, and would immediately proceed to disencumber the bird of its message. The correspondence conducted by these posts was often very considerable. Here is an example of the business hours of the famous Sultan Beybars. He arrived before Tyre one night; a tent was immediately pitched by torchlight, the secretaries, seven in number, were summoned, with the commander in chief; and the adjutant-general (*Amîr 'Alam*) with the military secretaries were instructed to draw up orders. For hours they ceased not to write letters and diplomas, to which the Sultan affixed his seal; this very night they indited in his presence fifty-six diplomas for high nobles, each with its proper introduction of praise to God. One of the Mamlûk letters has been preserved; it is a very characteristic epistle, and displays a grim and sarcastic appreciation of humour. Boemond, Prince of Antioch, was not present at the assault of that city by Beybars, and the Sultan

kindly conveyed the information of the disaster in a personal despatch. He begins by ironically complimenting Boemond on his change of title, from Prince to Count, in consequence of the fall of his capital, and then goes on to describe the siege and capture of Antioch. He spares his listener no detail of the horrors that ensued: "Hadst thou but seen thy knights trodden under the hoofs of the horses! thy palaces invaded by plunderers and ransacked for booty! thy treasures weighed out by the hundredweight! thy ladies bought and sold with thine own gear, at four for a dînâr! hadst thou but seen thy churches demolished, thy crosses sawn in sunder, thy garbled Gospels hawked about before the sun, the tombs of thy nobles cast to the ground; thy foe the Muslim treading thy Holy of Holies; the monk, the priest, the deacon, slaughtered on the altar; the rich given up to misery; princes of royal blood reduced to slavery! Couldst thou but have seen the flames devouring thy halls; thy dead cast into the fires temporal, with the fires eternal hard at hand! the churches of Paul and of Cosmas rocking and going down!—then thou wouldst have said, 'Would God that I were dust! Would God that I never had this letter!' . . . This letter holds happy tidings for thee: it tells thee that God watches over thee, to prolong thy days, inasmuch as in these latter days thou wert not in Antioch! Hadst thou been there, now wouldst thou be slain or a prisoner, wounded or disabled. A live man rejoiceth in his safety when he looketh on a field of slain. . . . As not a man hath escaped to tell thee the tale, we tell it thee; as no soul could apprise thee that thou art safe, while all the rest have perished, we apprise thee!" Nevertheless, Boemond was mightily incensed with the Sultan's sarcastic attentions.*

Beybars was exceptionally active in the discharge of his royal functions, and was indefatigable in making personal inspections of the forts and defences of his empire. Once he left his camp secretly, and made a minute inspection of his kingdom in disguise, returning before his absence had been found out by his troops. He maintained 12,000 soldiers under arms, of whom a third were

* See Yule's *Marco Polo*, vol. i. p. 25.

A RUDE WINDOW.

stationed in Egypt, a third at Damascus, and the remaining third at Aleppo. On his expeditions he was escorted by 4,000 horsemen. His history is a good example of the adventurous career of the Mamlûk. He was a native of Kipchak, between the Caspian and the Ural Mountains—a tall, ruddy fellow, with blue eyes, one of which had a cataract on it, and this defect nearly lost him a purchaser in the slave-market: indeed, he only fetched about £20. He was afterwards bought by the Amîr 'Alâ-ed-dîn Aydekîn, El-Bundukdâr, "the Arblasteer," from whom Beybars took his title El-Bundukdâry, or "Bendocquedar," as Marco Polo writes it. Subsequently he passed into the possession of Es-Sâlih Ayyûb, and his strong, determined nature, his promptitude and resource in action, high mettle, and resonant voice, soon gained him the admiration and fear of his contemporaries. His charge at Mansûra won the day and annihilated the crusade of St. Louis, and in due course he made his way to the throne, through, we are sorry to add, the usual road of assassination. His was not a scrupulous nature, and his own death was caused by poison which he had prepared for another; but he was the first great Mamlûk Sultan, and the right man to lay the foundations of the empire. "Bondogar," says William of Tripoli, "as a soldier was not inferior to Julius Cæsar, nor in malignity to Nero;" but he allows that the Sultan was "sober, chaste, just to his own people, and even kind to his Christian subjects." So well did he organize his wide-stretching provinces that no incapacity or disunion among his successors could pull down the fabric he had raised, until the wave of Ottoman conquest swept at last upon Egypt and Syria. To him is due the constitution of the Mamlûk army, the rebuilding of a navy of forty war galleys, the allotment of feofs to the lords and soldiers, the building of causeways and bridges, and digging of canals in various parts of Egypt. He strengthened the fortresses of Syria and garrisoned them with Mamlûks; he connected Damascus and Cairo by a postal service of four days, and used to play polo in both cities within the same week. His mosque still stands without the north gates, and his college constitutes an

important feature among the splendid monuments in the street known as "Betwixt the Palaces;" he founded an endowment for the burial of poor Muslims; in short, he was the best ruler Egypt had seen since the death of Saladin, whom he resembled in many respects, but not in chivalrous clemency. Some idea of the luxury and refinement of his court may be gathered from the list of his presents to the Persian Ilkhân Baraka, which included a Korân, said to have been transcribed by the Khalif 'Othmân, enclosed in a case of red silk embroidered with gold, over which was a leather cover lined with striped silk; a throne encrusted with carved ivory and ebony; a silver chest; prayer-carpets of all colours and sorts; curtains, cushions and tables; superb swords with silver hilts; instruments of music of painted wood; silver lamps and chandeliers; sandals from Khwârizm, bows from Damascus, with silk strings; pikes of Kana wood, with points tempered by the Arabs; exquisitely fashioned arrows in boxes plated with copper; large lamps of enamel with silver-gilt chains; black eunuchs, ingenious cook-girls, beautiful parrots; numbers of Arab horses, dromedaries, mules, wild asses, giraffes, and apes, with all kinds of saddles and trappings. Only remarkable qualities could have raised Beybars from the condition of a one-eyed slave to the founder of an empire that endured for nearly three centuries.

ARCH OF AQUEDUCT.

In addition to necessary business, state ceremonies occupied no inconsiderable part of the Sultan's time. The Mamlûk court was a minutely organized system, and the choice of officers to fill the numerous posts of the household, and the tact demanded in satisfying their jealousies and disagreements, to say nothing of the constant presentation of ceremonial dresses of honour, writing of diplomas, and granting of titles and appanages, must have been a tax upon their master. The posts about the royal person were no sinecures, and it needed no doubt some diplomacy to arrange the cabinet and household appointments to the satisfaction of everybody. Besides the great officers of state, such as the Viceroy or Vizîr, Commander-in-Chief (*Atâbek el-Asâkir* or *Amîr el-Kebîr*), the Majordomo (*Ustaddâr*), Chief of the Guard (*Râs Nauba*), Armour-bearer (*Silâhdâr*), Master of the Horse (*Amîr Akhôr*), Cup-bearer (*Sâky*), Taster (*Gâshenkîr*), Chamberlain, Equerry, Secretaries, &c., there were many smaller posts, which often commanded great power and influence. The *Amîr Meglis*, Lord of the Seat, so called because he enjoyed the privilege of sitting in the Sultan's presence, was the superintendent of the court physicians and surgeons; the *Gamdâr*, or Master of the Wardrobe, was a high official; the *Amîr Shikâr*, or Grand Huntsman, assisted the king in the chase; the *Amîr Tabar*, or Drum-Major, held almost the rank of the Chief of the Guard, and commanded the *Tabardârs*, or Halberdiers of the Sultan, ten in number; the *Bashmakdâr* carried the sovereign's slippers; the *Gûkandâr* bore the Sultan's polo-stick, a staff of painted wood about four cubits long, with a curved head; the *Zimamdârs* were eunuch guards. The various household departments had also their officers, who were often great nobles, and men of influence in the realm. The *Ustaddâr-es-Suhba* presided over the cookery; the *Tabl-khânâh*, or Drummery, was the department where the royal band was kept, and it was presided over by an officer called the *Amîr 'Alam*, or adjutant-general. The Sultan's band is stated at one time to have comprised four drums, forty kettle-drums, four hautbois, and twenty trumpets. The permission to have a band was among the most coveted distinctions

of Mamlûk times, and those lords who were allowed to have a band playing before their gates were styled *Amîr Tabl-khânâh*, or Lord of the Drums; they were about thirty in number, and each had command of a body of forty horsemen, with a band of ten drums, two hautbois, and four trumpets, and an appanage of about the value of 30,000 dînârs. The practice of employing these ceremonial bands went out with the Turkish conquest.

Then there was the *Tisht-khânâh*, or Vestiary, where the royal robes, jewels, seals, swords, &c., were kept, and where his clothes were washed; the *Sharâb-khânâh*, or Buttery, where were stored the liquors, sweetmeats, fruits, cordials, perfumes, and water for the sovereign; and the *Hawâig-khânâh*, or Larder, where the food and vegetables required for the day were prepared. At the time of Ketbugha the daily amount of food prepared here was 20,000 pounds, and under En-Nâsîr the daily cost of the larder was from 21,000 to 30,000 francs.

It will be seen that court life was complicated even in the fourteenth century, and the state ceremonies of a Mamlûk Sultan must have involved as much etiquette as any modern levée, and presented a much more splendid spectacle. When the Sultan rode abroad in state, to hold a review or to make a progress through his dominions, the composition of his escort was elaborately ordered. The Sultan Beybars, for example, rode in the centre, dressed in a black silk *gubba*, or vest with large sleeves, but without embroidery or gold; on his head was a turban of fine silk, with a pendant hanging between his shoulders; a Bedawy sword swung by his side, and a Dawûdy cuirass was concealed beneath his vest. In front a great lord carried the *Ghâshia*, or royal saddle-cloth, emblem of sovereignty, covered with gold and precious stones; and over his head, a Prince of the Blood, or the Commander-in-chief, bore the state parasol, made of yellow silk, embroidered with gold, and crowned with a golden bird perched upon a golden cupola. The housing of his horse's neck was yellow silk embroidered with gold, and a *zunnâry* or cloth of red atlas satin covered the crupper. The royal standard of silk and gold

thread was borne aloft, and the troops had their regimental colours of yellow Cairene silk, embroidered with the escutcheons of their leaders. Just before the Sultan rode two pages on white horses, with rich trappings; their robes were of yellow silk with borders of gold brocade, and a kuffîya of the same: it was their duty to see that the road was sound. A flute-player went before, and a singer followed after, chanting the heroic deeds of former kings, to the accompaniment of a hand-drum; poets sang verses antiphonally, accompanying themselves with the kemenga and môsil. Tabardârs carried halberts before and behind the Sultan, and the state poniards were supported by the polo-master (*gûkandâr*) in a scabbard on the left, while another dagger with a buckler was carried on the monarch's right. Close beside him rode the *Gamakdâr*, or Mace-bearer, a tall, handsome man, who carried the gold-headed mace aloft, and never withdrew his eyes from the countenance of his master. The great officers of the court followed with little less pomp. When a halt was called for the night, on long journeys, torches were borne before the Sultan, and as he approached the tent, which had gone on in front and been pitched before his arrival, his servants came to meet him with wax candles in stands inlaid with gold; pages and halberdiers surrounded him, the soldiers sang a chorus, and all dismounted except the Sultan, who rode into the vestibule of the tent, where he left his horse, and then entered the great round pavilion behind it. Out of this opened a little wooden bedroom, warmer than the tent, and a bath with heating materials was at hand. The whole was surrounded by a stockade, and the Mamlûks mounted guard in regular watches, inspected periodically by visiting rounds, with grand rounds twice in the night. The *Amîr Bâbdâr*, or Grand Doorkeeper, commanded the grand rounds. Servants and eunuchs slept at the door. Joinville describes the Sultan Beybars' camp at Damietta. It was entered through a tower of fir-poles covered round with coloured stuff, and inside was the tent where the lords left their weapons when they sought audience of the Sultan. "Behind this tent there was a doorway similar to the first, by

which you enter a large tent, which was the Sultan's hall. Behind the hall there was a tower like the one in front, through which you entered the Sultan's chamber. Behind the Sultan's chamber there was an enclosed space, and in the centre of this enclosure a tower, loftier than all the others, from which the Sultan looked out over the whole camp and country. From the enclosure a pathway went down to the river, to the spot where the Sultan had spread a tent over the water for the purpose of bathing. The whole of this encampment was enclosed within a trellis of wood-work, and on the outer side the trellises were spread with blue calico and the four towers were also covered with calico." *

HOUSES FOR VISITORS TO THE CEMETERIES.

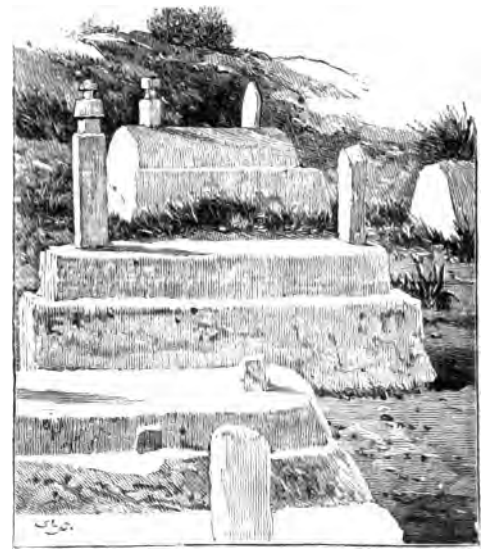
The historian of the Mamlûks is fond of telling how the Sultan made his progresses, held reviews of his troops, led a charge in battle, or joined in the games at home. The Mamlûks were ardent votaries of sport and athletic exercises. En-Nâsir was devoted to the chase, and imported numbers of sunkurs, sakers, falcons, hawks, and other birds of prey, and would present valuable feofs to his falconers, who rode beside him, hawk on wrist.

* Hutton's translation, p. 94.

Beybars was a keen archer, and a skilful hand at making arrows. He erected an archery-ground outside the Gate of Victory at Cairo, and here he would stay from noon till sunset, encouraging the Amîrs in their practice. The pursuit of archery became the chief occupation of the lords of his court. But Beybars, like most of the Mamlûks, was catholic in his tastes; he was fond of racing horses; spent two days in the week at polo; was famous for his management of the lance in the tournaments which formed one of the amusements of the day; and was so good a swimmer that he once swam across the Nile in his cuirass, dragging after him several great nobles seated on carpets.

Such outward details of the life of the Mamlûks may be gathered in El-Makrîzy: but if we seek to know something of the domestic life of the period, we must go elsewhere. We find indeed occasionally in the historian an account of the revels of the court on great festivals, and he tells us how during some festivities in Beybars' reign there was a concert every night in the Citadel, where a torch was gently waved to and fro to keep the time. But to understand the home-life of the Mamlûks, we must turn to the *Thousand and One Nights*, where, whatever the origin and scene of the stories, the manners and customs are drawn from the society which the narrators saw about them in Cairo in the days of the Mamlûks. From the doings of the characters in that immortal story-book, we may form a nearly accurate idea of how the Mamlûks amused themselves; and the various articles of luxury that have come down to us, the goblets, incense-burners, bowls, and dishes of fine inlaid silver and gold, go to confirm the fidelity of the picture. The wonderful thing about this old Mohammedan society is that it was what it was in spite of Islâm. With all their prayers and fasts and irritating ritual, the Muslims of the Middle Ages contrived to amuse themselves. Even in their religion they found opportunities for enjoyment. They made the most of the festivals of the Faith, and put on their best clothes; they made up parties—to visit the tombs, indeed—but to visit them right merrily on the backs of their

asses;* they let their servants go out and amuse themselves too in the gaily illuminated streets, hung with silk and satin, and filled with dancers, jugglers, and revellers, fantastic figures, the Oriental Punch, and the Chinese Shadows; or they went to witness the thrilling and horrifying performances of the dervîshes. There was excitement to be derived from the very creed; for did they not believe in those wonderful creatures the Ginn, who dwelt in the Mountains of Kâf, near the mysterious Sea of Darkness, where Khidr drank of the Fountain of Life? And who could tell when he might come across one of these awful beings, incarnate in the form of a jackal or serpent; or meet, in his own hideous shape, the appalling Nesnâs, who is a man split in two, with half a head, half a body, one arm and one leg, and yet hops along with astonishing agility, and is said, when caught, to have been found very sweet eating by the people of Hadramaut? To live among such fancies must have given a relish to life, even when one knew that one's destiny was inscribed in the sutures of the skull, and in spite of those ascetic souls who found consolation in staring at a blank wall until they saw the name of Allah blazing on it.



MOHAMMEDAN GRAVES.

What society was like at the time of the first Mamlûks may be

* Nâsir i-Khusrau (eleventh century) says that 50,000 donkeys were on hire at Cairo in his time. They stood at street-corners, with gay saddles, and everybody rode them.

gathered very clearly from the poems* of Behâ-ed-dîn Zuheyr, the secretary of Es-Sâlih Ayyûb, who survived his master and died in 1258. The Egyptians of his acquaintance, as reflected in his graceful verse, seem to have resembled our own latter-day friends in their pleasures and passions. Love is the great theme of Zuheyr as well as of Anacreon or Catullus; the poet waxes eloquent over a long succession of mistresses, blonde and brown, constant and fickle, kind and coy,—

> Like the line of beauty her waving curl,
> Her stature like the lance.

We read of stolen interviews, in despite of parents and guardians, maidens "waiting at the tryst alone," and various other breaches of Mohammedan morals. If Zuheyr fairly represented his time, life at Cairo in the thirteenth century was not without its savour:—

> Well! the night of youth is over, and grey-headed morn is near:
> Fare ye well, ye tender meetings with the friends I held so dear!
> O'er my life these silvery locks are shedding an unwonted light,
> And revealing many follies youth had hidden out of sight.
> Yet though age is stealing o'er me, still I love the festive throng,
> Still I love a pleasant fellow and a pleasant merry song;
> Still I love the ancient tryst, though the trysting time is o'er,
> And the tender maid that ne'er may yield to my caresses more;
> Still I love the sparkling wine-cup which the saucy maidens fill, &c.

Despite all the ordinances of the Prophet, the wine-cup plays a prominent part in Zuheyr's catalogue of the joys of life, and he is full of contempt for the prudent mentor who reproved him:—

> Let us, friends, carouse and revel,
> And send the mentor to the devil!

If the bowls that have descended to us were drinking-cups, the Mamlûk thought very little of a "pint stoup." Like our own Norse and Saxon ancestors, he loved his wassail, and took it right jovially, until he found himself under the table, or would have

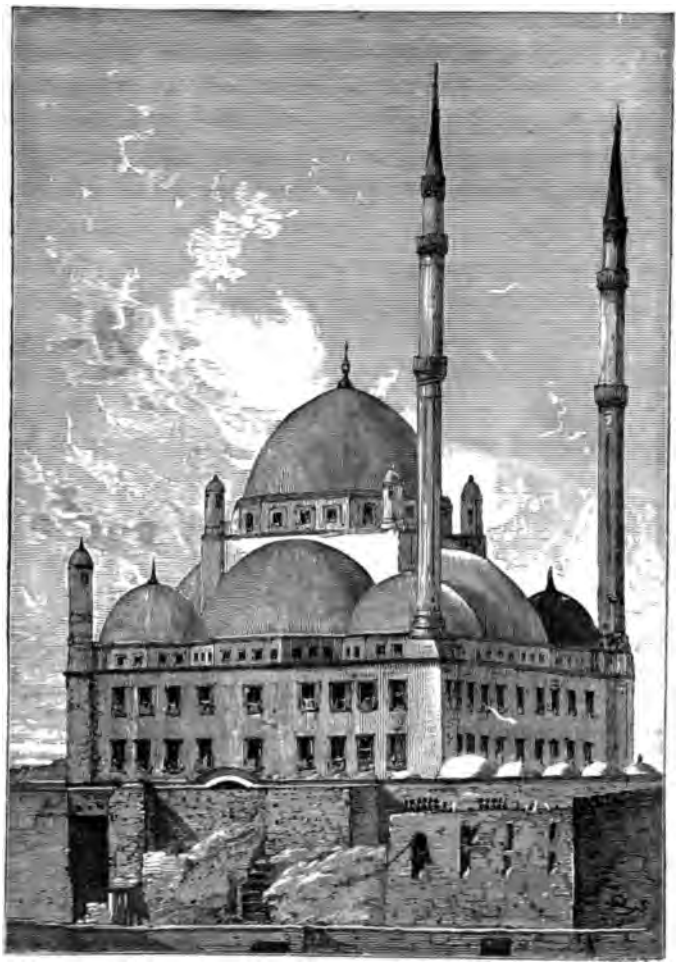
* Admirably translated by the late Prof. E. H. Palmer. (Cambridge, 1877.)

done so had there been any tables of the right sort. Zuheyr sings—

> Here, take it, 'tis empty! and fill it again
> With wine that's grown old in the wood;
> That in its proprietor's cellars has lain
> So long that at least it goes back to the reign
> Of the famous Nushirwan the Good—
>
> With wine which the jovial friars of old
> Have carefully laid up in store,
> In readiness there for their feast-days to hold—
> With liquor, of which if a man were but *told*,
> He'd roll away drunk from the door!

Many of the Mamlûk Sultans are described as being addicted to wine, and the great Lord Beysary was at one time stated to be incapable of taking part in affairs, because he was entirely given over to drink and hazard. Yet there are redeeming points in this sottishness. The Muslims of the days of good Harûn, and not less of the other "golden prime" of Beybars and Barkûk, did not take their wine moodily or in solitude. They loved to have a jovial company round them, and plenty of flowers and sweet scents on the board; they perfumed their beards with civet, and sprinkled their beautiful robes with rose-water, while ambergris and frankincense, burned in the censers we still possess, diffused a delicious fragrance through the room. Nor was the feast complete without music and the voices of singing women. A ravishing slave girl, with a form like the waving willow, and a face as resplendent as the moon, sang soft sad Arabian melodies to the accompaniment of the lute, till the guests rolled over in ecstasy. And the sum of these revels was often a palace such as Kubla Khan might have dreamt. We can scarcely realise now the stately pleasure domes which the Mamlûks once decreed; how they hung them with rich stuffs, and strewed them with costly carpets; what wealth of carving and ivory-work embellished their doors and ceilings; how gloriously inlaid were their drinking and washing vessels; how softly rich the colouring of their stained windows. They offer the most singular contrasts of any series of princes in the world. A band of lawless adventurers, slaves in

origin, butchers by choice, turbulent, bloodthirsty, and too often treacherous, these slave kings had a keen appreciation for the arts which would have done credit to the most civilised ruler that



MOSQUE OF MOHAMMED 'ALY.

ever sat on a constitutional throne. Their morals were indifferent, their conduct was violent and unscrupulous, yet they show in their buildings, their decoration, their dress, and their furniture,

which you enter a large tent, which was the Sultan's hall. Behind the hall there was a tower like the one in front, through which you entered the Sultan's chamber. Behind the Sultan's chamber there was an enclosed space, and in the centre of this enclosure a tower, loftier than all the others, from which the Sultan looked out over the whole camp and country. From the enclosure a pathway went down to the river, to the spot where the Sultan had spread a tent over the water for the purpose of bathing. The whole of this encampment was enclosed within a trellis of wood-work, and on the outer side the trellises were spread with blue calico and the four towers were also covered with calico." *

HOUSES FOR VISITORS TO THE CEMETERIES.

The historian of the Mamlûks is fond of telling how the Sultan made his progresses, held reviews of his troops, led a charge in battle, or joined in the games at home. The Mamlûks were ardent votaries of sport and athletic exercises. En-Nâsir was devoted to the chase, and imported numbers of sunkurs, sakers, falcons, hawks, and other birds of prey, and would present valuable feofs to his falconers, who rode beside him, hawk on wrist.

* Hutton's translation, p. 94.

CHAPTER IV

THE MUSEUM OF ARAB ART

It is doubtful whether one in a hundred of the visitors who habitually flock to Cairo during the winter months knows that there is such a thing there as a Museum of Arab Art. If it is spoken of, it is immediately confused with the Bûlâk, now the Gîza, Museum. There is indeed no comparison possible between the two: the Gîza collections are the most wonderful of their kind in the whole world; and whether we stop to marvel at the statues of the Ancient Empire, and the exquisite wall-paintings which have resisted the destroyer Time for six thousand years, or stand before the long row of mummy-cases found in the priestly tomb at Deyr el-Bahry, and try to realise that there before us lie the very bodies of the warrior kings of Thebes, of Seti, whose face is familiar to us in the relief at Abydos, of great Thothmes, whose armies overran Hither Asia, of the famous Rameses II., the Sesostris of the Greeks, the Pharaoh of the Israelite oppression, and the builder of half the temples of Egypt—we shall equally be forced to admit that no other Museum can show such treasures of the remote past, or overwhelm us so utterly with an almost incredible antiquity.

But there is "one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon," and while the gems of Saracenic art preserved in the lesser Museum cannot compete in antiquity or in number with the rich collection at Bûlâk, in beauty of execution and in their unique character they may challenge comparison with almost any other exhibition. The interest which at present attaches to everything

connected with Egypt, and the constant flow of visitors to Cairo, may perhaps induce students to turn more attention than has hitherto been vouchsafed to the beautiful branch of art which is represented in its utmost perfection on the monuments and mosques of the Mamlûk capital. Wherever the Saracens carried their conquering arms a new and characteristic style of art is seen to arise. In the mosques and private houses of Cairo, of Damascus, of Kairowân, of Cordova and Seville, throughout Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia, North Africa and Spain, and in Sicily and the Balearic Isles, we trace their influence in the thoroughly individual and characteristic style of architecture and ornament which is variously known as "Arabian," "Mohammedan," "Moorish," and "Saracenic." The last term is the best, because the most comprehensive.

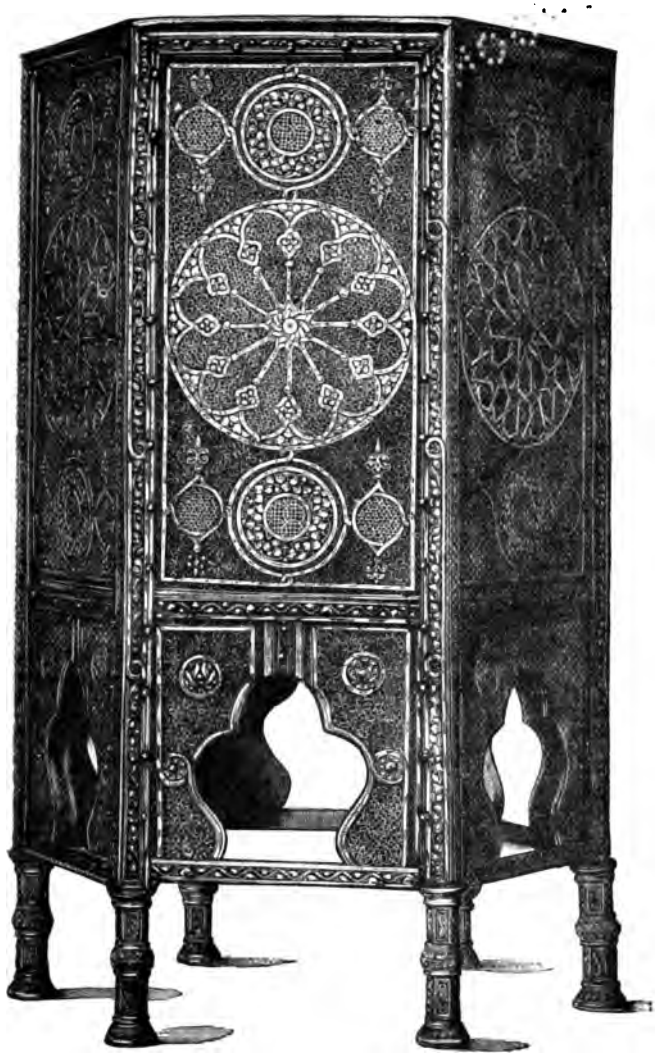
GEOMETRICAL KUFIC INSCRIPTION:
"IN THE NAME OF GOD THE COMPASSIONATE, THE MERCIFUL."

"Arabian" seems to imply that the art owed its origin to Arabia and the Arabs, whereas it was only when the Arabs left Arabia and ceased to be purely Arabian, that the style of art miscalled Arab made its appearance. "Mohammedan" indicates that the art was the work and invention of Muslims, which can hardly be maintained in the face of the fact that the first great monument of Saracenic architecture in Egypt was designed by a Christian, and that much of the finest work was produced by Copts and Greeks. "Moorish" limits the art to the Mohammedan rulers of Spain, where, indeed, a singularly magnificent development of the style took place, but this was neither the earliest nor the most typical form. "Saracenic" art includes all the work of the countries

under Saracen rule, and, moreover, carries with it the perfectly accurate impression that the chief development of the art was at the time when the Saracens were a fighting Power and the name was a household word among the Crusading nations of the West. It was just when the armies of Europe were coming into contact with Saladin and his kinsmen and successors, that the art which we call Saracenic acquired its highest perfection; and it was under the rule of the anti-crusading Mamlûk Sultans of Egypt and Syria that the noblest monuments of architecture, the finest carvings in wood, ivory, and stone, the most splendid chasing and inlay of silver and bronze, the richest effects of stained glass and enamel, and the greatest triumphs of the potter's art, were attained and produced in extraordinary abundance. Almost all the noblest mosques of Cairo belong to the Mamlûk period, and are included between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries. The beautiful inlaid silver and brass tables in the Museum of Arab Art at Cairo, the chased bowls and trays and candlesticks which are found in the great museums of Europe, belong to the same productive epoch, and centre round the fourteenth century. The enamelled glass lamps, which are the envy of every collector, are almost confined to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The carved panels which give so peculiar a richness to the doors and pulpits of mosques are of the same period, and the highest effects of the Damascus and Rhodian potteries are ascribed with much probability to this same Mohammedan renaissance. Why this should be—why the singularly tyrannical, bloodthirsty, and unstable rule of the Mamlûks should have fostered so remarkable a development of art—remains, as we have said, a mystery; but the fact is indisputable that the period of Turkish and Circassian tyranny in Egypt and Syria was the age of efflorescence of the purest Saracenic art in all its branches.*

This art is different in each of its centres, yet preserves a certain unmistakable general character common to every manifestation. Whether it be the simple restrained style of the

* See my *Art of the Saracens of Egypt* (Committee of Council on Education, 1886).



KURSY, OR TABLE, OF ARABESQUE FILIGREE WORK IN SILVER AND BRASS.

Cairo artists or the more florid work of Damascus, the rich yet temperate decoration of Brûsa or the over-elaborate detail of "Moresque" ornament, the general principle is one, and runs through each separate development. The style is marked less by structural character than by the decoration. The well-known geometrical and foliated ornament which we call Arabesque retains its individuality in every country in which Saracenic art has a place, and this with certain peculiar but unvarying methods of dealing with angles, a bold and unique use of colour, and a remarkable mastery of the effects of perspective and shadow, are more essentially characteristic of Saracenic art than even the familiar dome and minaret. Whatever the artists of the kings and noblemen who built the great monuments of Saracenic art may have borrowed from their Byzantine and Persian forerunners, they contrived to introduce an element of their own and to effect a development of their original materials that virtually entitles them to the honours of inventors, and wholly distinguishes their work from any other style.

The Arab Museum at Cairo is unique, and though it is in its infancy, it promises to develop into a worthy representation of that beautiful offshoot of Byzantine art which has made Cairo the artist's paradise. That such a Museum ought to be formed, and formed quickly, is evident to any one who has seen the monuments of Cairo in recent years. It is not too much to say that there is not a single mosque or mansion of the golden age of Cairene architecture which is not in a more or less ruined condition. Natural decay will account for a great deal of the lamentable state of the monuments, which, unlike those of ancient Egypt, are built of perishable materials, stucco and brick, to which no skill could insure the immortality of the granite and limestone of the temples and pyramids. But there is more than natural decay in the matter. There is the wilful Philistine barbarous ignorance of the people who have inherited these priceless monuments of an extinct art—the ruthless modern Egyptians who build their lath-and-plaster booths against the façades of mosques; who prefer the

monstrosities of Turkish taste to the exquisite refinement of the purest period of Cairene architecture; who pulled down the palaces of Mamlûk princes to make room for the nondescript erections and glass windows of the Frank bricklayer; who have no comprehension of the beauty that they are neglecting and defacing; and to whom the sole idea suggested by a specimen of the old art is how much some traveller will give for it. And then there are travellers, Vandals by instinct and profession, who will spare nothing and ruin everything to take home a "souvenir" of their travels to other barbarians at home. Our French friends, who are so fond of twitting us with our supposed trick of whittling our names on the monuments of Egypt (where the biggest and most glaring are always French), are the chief spoilers of Cairo. Where are all the missing bronze doors of the mosques, and the other treasures of Arab art, which those who have known Cairo long remember

PANEL OF TABLE IN FILIGREE WORK, SILVER AND BRASS, WITH ARABIC INSCRIPTIONS IN SILVER.

to have seen in former days and which are now seen no more? At Paris. And if we ask who was the Goth who cut a great square piece out of the mosaics of the mosque of Bars Bey in the Eastern Cemetery, the doorkeeper will amaze us by answering that it was the enlightened Mariette, the denouncer of English tourists, who ruined the mosaics in order to send an *objet* to the Paris Exposition! Finally, there is another, a chief cause of the ruin of the Arab monuments: the rulers of Egypt do not appreciate them, and, having confiscated most of the religious endowments, leave the mosques to perish without an effort to save them. We have only to look at the buildings of Isma'îl's reign to form a very fair estimate of Khedivial taste. A prince who could suffer the incongruous mass called the Rifa'îya to be set up opposite the mosque of Sultan Hasan, while he left the carved frieze and marbles of the latter to go to ruin; who could run a new street through the mosque of Kûsûn, and then replace it by such a monstrosity as we saw slowly growing to its eventual hideousness, was hardly the man to cherish the artistic monuments which fate perversely committed to his charge; and when the ruler does not interfere, it is scarcely likely that the subjects, even if they be Ministers, will exert themselves in the land of *laisser aller* to save what nobody values.

The late Khedive, though he probably understood and cared for Saracenic art no more than his predecessors, had the merit of being candidly open to advice, and it was in consequence of such advice that he took the first serious step towards the better surveillance of the mediaeval monuments by appointing a Commission for the preservation of the Monuments of Arab Art (Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe), which includes the names of several well-known enthusiasts in the subject, resident in Cairo. Although this Commission was instituted in December, 1881, the political anarchy of the succeeding year prevented the practical exercise of the functions delegated to it. Since the war, however, and the restoration of order, it has met fairly regularly, and personal observation of its work (before

I was myself appointed a member of the Commission) convinced me that something definite was at last being done for the preservation of the Arab monuments. The functions of the Commissioners

TOP OF A KURSY, OR TABLE, IN FILIGREE WORK, SILVER AND BRASS, WITH ARABIC INSCRIPTIONS IN SILVER.

are, first, to make an inventory of all Arab monuments which have an historical or artistic value (over seven hundred have already been registered); secondly, to advise the Minister of Wakfs or

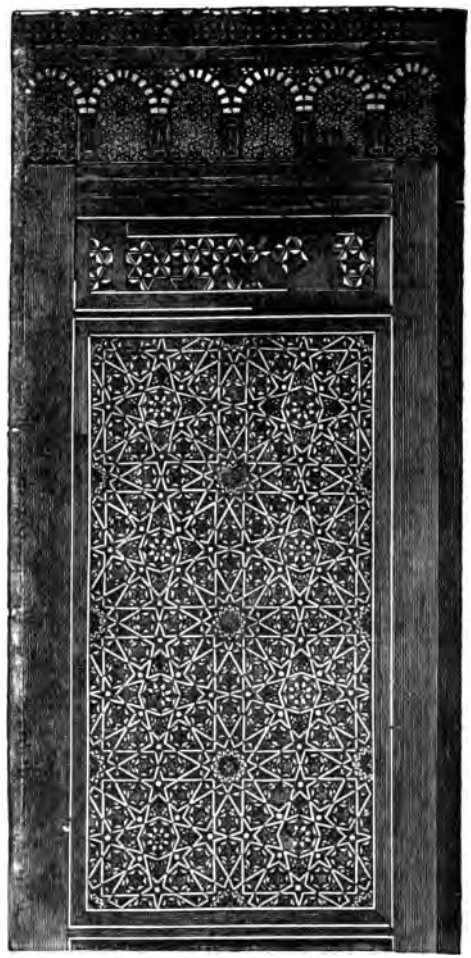
Religious Trusts as to the repairs needed to preserve the more ruined monuments; thirdly, to convince themselves by personal inspection that their recommendations are strictly and carefully carried into execution; fourthly, to preserve in the Ministry of Religious Trusts plans of all the monuments surveyed, and records of the observations and identifications made by the Commission, copies of ancient inscriptions, and the like; and lastly, they have power to remove to the Arab Museum any objects of interest which may be found among the débris of fallen monuments, and which cannot be replaced in their original positions.

How the Commission is carrying out its instructions under the first four heads need not be discussed here. The ample annual Reports testify to its industry and zeal.* In pursuance of the authorisation to take charge of any stray fragments and specimens which might be encountered in the buildings which come within its powers, it has accumulated a really unique series of objects representing not only the chief branches of Saracenic art, but the best periods in the history of the art. These objects form the collections of the Museum of Arab art, which only exist in consequence of the labours of the Commissioners, and especially of the late Rogers Bey and of Franz Pasha.

The Museum, when I saw it, had its home in the sanctuary, or eastern cloisters, of the old Fâtimy mosque of El-Hâkim, but after various plans for its location had been formed and rejected, it has at last, I believe, found a new resting-place. Objects of beauty and interest delight us at every step. Many of them must have lain concealed in the store-chambers of mosques for years past, others have been rescued from the restorer's hands. The very first things that meet the eye are, perhaps, the most exquisite specimens in the whole collection. They consist of a series of those low tables, called *kursy*, upon which, after placing a large round metal tray on the top, the Mohammedan eats his meals. These little tables are ordinarily made of common wood, covered with inlaid squares

* See the *Exercice*, 1891, *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe*, fascicule vii. (Le Caire, 1892).

and triangles of mother-of-pearl and ebony and coloured woods, arranged in geometrical patterns. They may be seen in process of manufacture in the street leading from the Ghûrîya to the Azhar, and cost about thirty francs. These are the commonest sort. A better kind used formerly to be made, especially in Syria, with stalactite corbels supporting the top of the table, medallions of carved mother-of-pearl between open panels, and with carving on every piece of the thousand squares of mother-of-pearl that, alternating with ebony, form the surface of the table. These have now become comparatively rare. The tables in the Arab Museum, of which engravings are here shown, are unlike any that one meets with even in the most superbly furnished houses. They all came from religious foundations, and are unique. Those engraved on pp. 101, 103, 105, were probably not made by Cairo artists; the work is too delicate, and the arabesques are not of the well-known Cairene style. Perhaps they were made by Syrian or possibly Persian artists



PANEL OF TABLE, EBONY AND IVORY.

imported into Cairo. That on p. 101 is six-sided, made of silver and brass filigree work of exceedingly beautiful design and extraordinary delicacy, resembling lace more than metal. The other is of very similar workmanship, but heavier and with stronger lines; a panel of it is shown on page 103, and the top on page 105. The panel, it will be noticed, has folding doors, intended for the insertion of a brazier, which would stand on the shelf inside. This *kursy* is covered with Arabic inscriptions, of a fair type of Naskhy or cursive Arabic. The inscription on the top bar of the panel reads, "Glory to our lord the Sultân El-Melik En-Nâsir Nâsir-ed-dunyâ wa-d-dîn Mohammed, son of the Sultân El-Melik El-Mansûr Esh-Shahîd Kalaûn Es-Sâlihy. God magnify his triumphs!" We read the same inscription on the bars above and below the doors, but in these cases the name of the prince, Mohammed, is enclosed in a silver circle. The large Arabic letters in the two panels above and below the doors contain laudatory titles of the same prince; and so does the inscription that runs round the top of the table. The medallions in the centres of the doors have the words: (right) "Glory to our lord the Sultân," (left) "El-Melik En-Nâsir Mohammed;" and that in the panel above completes the sentence: "Son of El-Mansûr Kalaûn." Kalaûn was a Mamlûk slave of Es-Sâlih, a grand-nephew of Saladin, who governed Egypt at the time of the Crusade of St. Louis, near the middle of the thirteenth century. Kalaûn himself came to the throne soon after the death of Beybars, the establisher of the power of the Mamlûk Sultans; and after reigning from 1279—1290, and building the famous Mâristân, or Mosque-hospital, left the kingdom to his sons, of whom El-Melik En-Nâsir Mohammed, for whose mosque this table was made, ruled Egypt and Syria, with several intermissions, from 1293 to 1341. His mosque next to the Mâristân, and his other and more interesting mosque in the Citadel, to say nothing of many other monuments, attest his wealth and, better still, his taste. This table must therefore be dated at about the beginning of the fourteenth century, and the similarity of the work

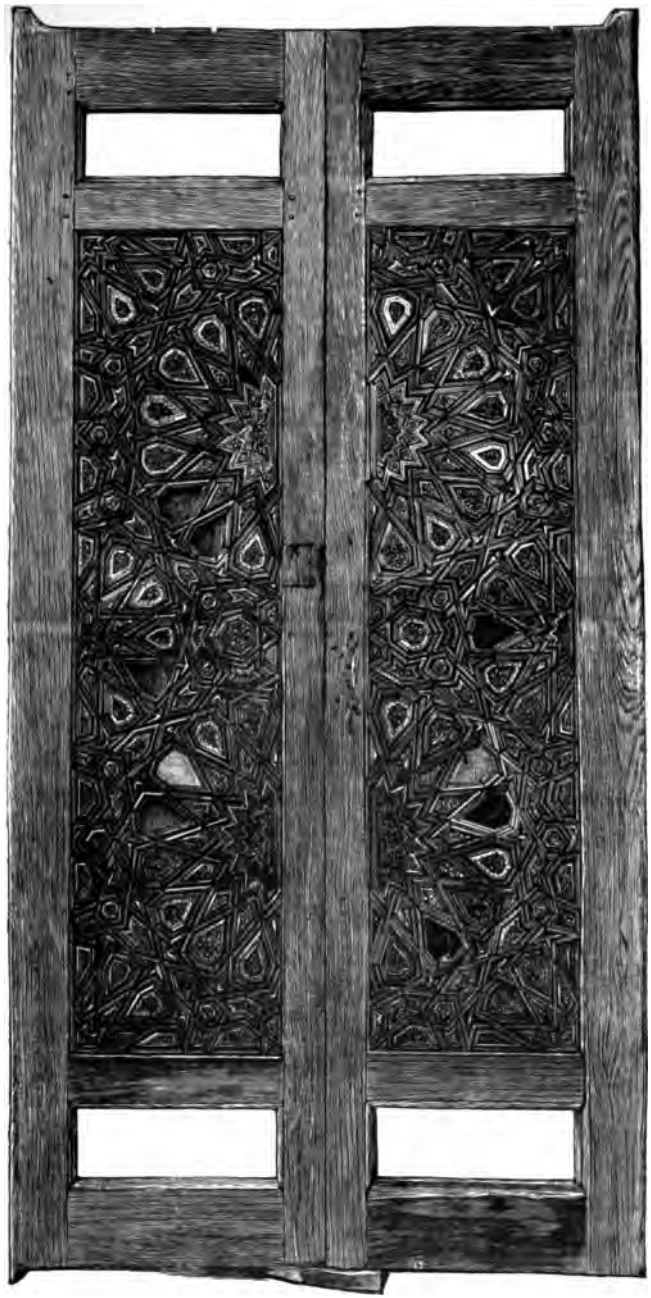
KURSY, OR TABLE, OF WOOD, WITH CARVED ARABESQUES, AND TURNED OPENWORK.

induces me to place the other *kursy* (p. 101) (which also came from the "wakf" of En-Nâsir) at about the same epoch.

The table engraved on p. 109 is probably Cairene, and exhibits the ball-and-bead pattern so common in the *meshrebiyas* or lattice windows of Cairo; the stalactite ornaments and the arabesque panels in the middle are common features in Cairo woodwork, though seldom seen in domestic furniture. Another table, six-sided like the rest, of which only the upper part of one of the six sides is engraved on page 107, presents a very usual Cairene pattern (which is not, however, confined to Egypt), picked out in ivory and ebony with excellent effect. It is the least peculiar of the four, but by no means the least beautiful. Both these tables once belonged to the "wakf" of Sitta Khawend Baraka, the mother of Sha'bân, 14th century; but it does not necessarily follow that they are of the same age as her mosque.

The Arab Art Museum at Cairo is not rich in tiles: it possesses, indeed, a good series of inscriptional tiles with the Mohammedan profession of faith, and other pious formulae, in white upon a blue ground; and it has a certain number of yellow tiles, not of great beauty. Nor does it own any very fine specimens of marble mosaics, or stonework generally, though there are two eagles in relief and some arabesques carved in stone which are worthy of notice. The niche (*mihrâb*), from the tomb of Sitta Rukeyya, is not of the characteristic inlaid marble and mother-of-pearl type, but of admirably carved wood, ruined, however, by a thick coating of emerald green paint, laid on by some modern barbarian, which resisted all attempts to remove it. Another niche is from the mosque of Sitta Nefîsa, and is of the finest style of arabesque carving, as may be seen in the wood-cut, page 59.

Of examples of panelled mosque doors, carved over with arabesques and geometrical patterns, there are some admirable specimens in the Arab Art Museum, notably a pair of lofty doors from Damietta, and two others, with the bold ornament of the oldest Arab work, from the mosque of Ibn-Tûlûn, in Cairo. The best examples of the singularly beautiful kind of door, in which the large



PANELLED DOOR, INLAID WITH IVORY AND EBONY, FROM A MOSQUE.

panels are filled up with exquisite geometrical mosaics, formed by small carved pieces of coloured wood, ivory, and ebony, are in the Coptic churches which now occupy the interior of the old Roman fort of Babylon, near Masr El-'Atîka (or "Old Cairo"). The screens which divide the east end from the main body of the church are constructed of this work, and are of unparalleled richness. At the South Kensington Museum are some doors of this kind, acquired from M. de St. Maurice, almost, if not quite, equal to any in the Coptic churches. The Cairo Museum could not, as I knew it in 1883, compete with the Coptic screens or the St. Maurice doors, but it possesses a small door with two panels of this style, which in spite of injuries is a delicate piece of work. It is engraved on page 111.

It is, however, in mosque lamps that the Museum of Arab Art is absolutely without rival. To say nothing of the curious chandelier (engraved on page 113) of iron filigree work, with an inscribed copper band round the middle, or of the fine bronze lamp from the mosque of El-Ghûry (the last of the Mamlûk Sultans, who died at the time of the Turkish conquest of Egypt in 1517), the bottom of which, inscribed with El-Ghûry's name and titles on some of its bosses, is engraved on page 117, the Arab Museum possesses some fourscore enamelled glass lamps of the finest work and the best period. The Commission for the Preservation of the Monuments of Arab Art was fortunate enough to light upon some long-concealed hoards of lamps, and ordered their removal to the Museum, where they now stand in locked glass cases, and are the joy of the beholder. A few of them are plain and opaque, of a pale green or blue hue; but the majority are of transparent glass, worked over with enamel, forming arabesque and floral ornaments, and recording the name and titles of the Sultan in whose mosque they hung, together with a verse from the Korân in flowing Naskhy Arabic characters. They came from about a dozen mosques, but the larger number were derived from those of Sultan Hasan and Barkûk. As glass they are by no means excellent, being, indeed, of bad colour and full of bubbles; nor is the shape above criticism.

It is the design and colour of the enamel which gives these lamps their singular beauty. Sometimes the enamel forms the ground, through which the transparent design must have shown with fine effect when the light was inside; sometimes the pattern is in the enamel, and the ground is of plain glass. The outlines are generally in thin strokes of a dull red, and the thicker lines and ornaments are in cobalt blue. Red and blue, with touches of white and pale green, are the usual colours. A beautiful coloured illustration of one of these lamps is given as a

CHANDELIER IN IRON AND COPPER.

frontispiece to Mr. Nesbitt's Catalogue of the Glass Vessels in the South Kensington Museum. The specimen engraved on the opposite page is one of the Cairo Museum lamps, and bears, besides the name and titles of Sultan Hasan in the large central inscription and on the fesses of the six medallions, an appropriate verse on the neck from the Koran, chap. xxiv., "God is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth: his Light is as a niche in which is a Lamp, within a glass, as it were a glittering star: it is lit from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, the oil whereof would well-nigh shine though no fire touched it: Light upon Light: God guideth to his Light whom he willeth"; which is of frequent occurrence, not only on lamps, but in the inscriptional decorations of mosques. Six glass loops served to attach the lamp to the suspensory wires. The illumination was effected by a small glass vessel supplied with oil and a wick, which was suspended within the lamp. An engraving necessarily gives but a very inadequate idea of a work of art in which light and colour are the essential characteristics; the deficiency, however, may easily be amended by an inspection of the lamps in the British and South Kensington Museums.

Few people probably are aware how rich and representative a collection of examples of Saracenic art is contained in the South Kensington Museum. The directors of that institution have always been alive to the merits of Eastern art. So early as 1854 some of the finest specimens of Saracenic brass-work were acquired, and in 1855 the sale of the Bernal collection afforded an opportunity, which was not neglected, of purchasing some exquisite examples of the very characteristic metal-work of the Saracenic workmen of Venice. Always essentially an Oriental city, Venice attracted not a few notable artists from Syria and Asia Minor, and we frequently find the names of some of the most famous Asiatic engravers on brass dishes and bowls which were almost certainly made at Venice, though the style is so Saracenic that, but for the forms, and sometimes other evidence, such as the presence of a European coat of arms, it would be difficult to affirm that they were not

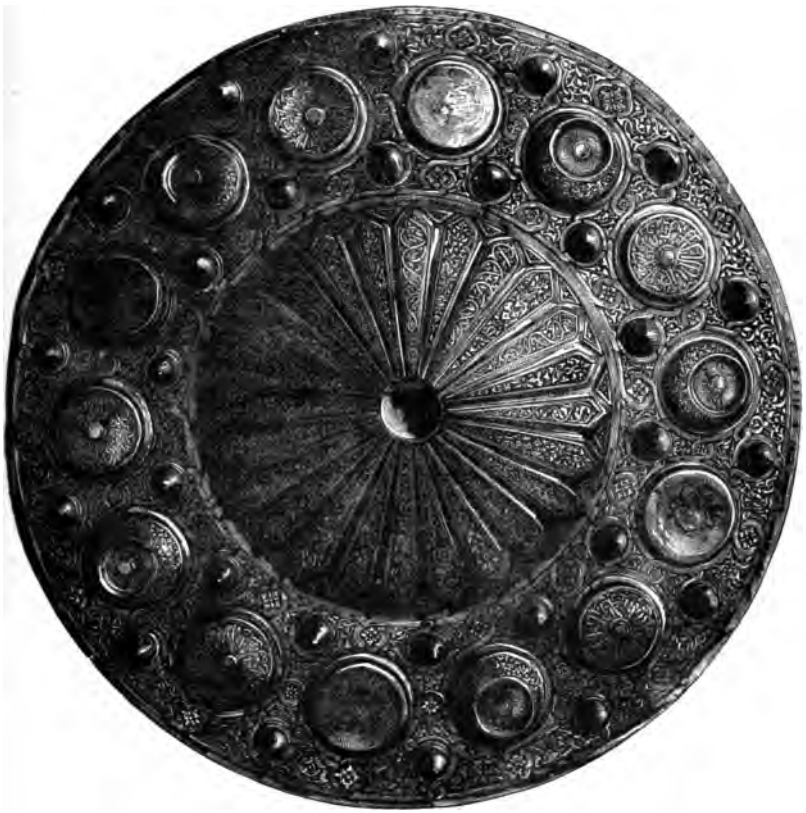
purely Asiatic. In 1869, however, the first large addition to the Saracenic collection was made by the acquisition of the Meymar

ENAMELLED GLASS MOSQUE LAMP, CAIRO MUSEUM.

collection, which had been exhibited at the Paris Exposition of 1867. By this judicious purchase the Museum became possessed

of some of the finest specimens of Cairene wood-carving of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that can be seen anywhere, together with a complete pulpit from a mosque, bearing the superscription of Kâit Bey, who has been frequently referred to. Since this invaluable addition the Saracenic collection has been growing by small degrees, chiefly in the departments of pottery and wood-work, while the travels of Mr. Purdon Clarke gave a fresh impetus by the removal to the Museum of an entire room, of a fine period, from its home in Damascus, and by many purchases of windows and wood-work, &c. In 1883, however, the collection was nearly doubled by two extensive purchases. One was the St. Maurice collection, which had been exhibited at the Exposition of 1881, and comprised some of the rarest and most exquisite specimens of Cairene wood and ivory carving, metal-work, and mosaics that have ever been seen in Europe. M. de St. Maurice's official position in the household of the ex-Khedive Isma'îl gave him unusual facilities for acquiring objects of art in Cairo, and he did not neglect his opportunities. There are some things in his collection that we should probably never have seen in the market again: bronze filigree plates from mosque doors, carved panels of ivory and wood from pulpit doors, and part of a dado in mosaic of porphyry, coloured marbles, and enamel, which are really priceless; while the more ordinary objects in the collection are of no little value and beauty, from the great *meshrebiya* with its lattice panels, enclosing an Arabic inscription, and surmounted by 10 *kamarîyas*, or windows of coloured glass outlined by carved stucco, to the frames of red Rhodian and soft Damascus tiles, and the striking black and yellow azulejos of Andalusia. Two hundred objects were added to the Saracenic collections by this important acquisition, besides a valuable and instructive series of plaster casts of characteristic portions of architectural decoration and stalactite ornament from the buildings of Cairo. The other chief addition made to the collections in 1883 was the result of a special mission to Cairo. I visited Egypt shortly after the war, at the request of the Committee of Council on Education, with the

view of discovering whether the disturbances had brought many objects of Saracenic art into the market; and though the anticipation was not realised to the extent that had been hoped, I was still able to bring home some four hundred specimens, including a com-



BOTTOM OF A BRASS CHANDELIER, FROM THE MOSQUE OF EL-GHÛRY.

plete room, with its large lattice window and eleven coloured glass windows above it; another entire *meshrebiya*, with the corbels and carving beneath, besides some pottery, and a large collection of casts from the arabesque and Kufic decoration of the mosques and other buildings of Cairo. The representation of Saracenic

turned, carved, and inlaid woodwork, of chased metalwork and *azziminata*, of pottery and glass, at the South Kensington Museum, is now singularly rich and varied, while the British Museum perhaps surpasses it in choiceness, in its few but matchless specimens of enamelled lamps and of the finest chased brass work inlaid with silver.

It is a matter of congratulation that the Ministry of Religious Trusts should have wisely decided on establishing a Museum of Arab Art, and should have been able in a brief space of time to gather together the beautiful objects of which I have selected a few for notice. Eastern institutions, however, are notoriously unstable, and it cannot be too strongly urged upon English travellers that the more they visit the Museum of Art, and show an interest in it and an appreciation of its importance, the more likely is the Egyptian Government to continue its present intelligent course and enlarge its conceptions of the functions of the Museum and of the Commission to which the collections owe their position and preservation. The beginning is excellent, but a vast deal remains to be done; and what is most needed at present, besides an increased budget, is the constant pressure of English public opinion, and the influence of English Art lovers and connoisseurs upon the Egyptian Government and its English advisers.

CHAPTER V

THE CAIRENE

WHOSO would know what the townsfolk of Egypt are like should make acquaintance with the Cairo shopkeeper. The tradespeople are the conservative element in Egypt: it is they who keep up the old traditions and walk in the old paths. The upper classes are becoming daily less and less Oriental in outward appearance and habits, though it will take some time to Europeanise their minds. They dance with foreign ladies, wear Frankish clothes, smoke cigarettes, enjoy French plays, and, but for their Eastern habits of tyranny, peculation, insincerity, and corruption, they might for all the world be Europeans. They have, indeed, retained one national feature, the red fez or *tarbûsh*; and the collection of fezes (for the Mohammedan never takes off his hat) in the stalls of the opera, and the veils of gauze stretched in front of the boxes on the grand tier, to hide the beauties of the harîm, are the only things in the Cairene opera that remind us that we are not in Paris. Even the national coffee cups are manufactured in Europe.

But the working people are very much what they have been for centuries. They fully appreciate the advantages of dealing with Franks, whom they commonly cheat, but they have no desire to imitate the customs or dress of the infidels. Cairo, in its bazars and markets, is very much the same place as the Cairo Lane described so minutely in his "Account of the Manners and

Customs of the Modern Egyptians"; and Lane's Cairo was to all intents and purposes the city of Saladin and the Mamlûks, the city so romantically pictured in the stories of the "Thousand and One Nights." The course of the world runs slowly in the East. To use a paradox, those who know the "Modern Egyptians," when they visit Cairo, are surprised to find that nothing surprises them, that everything in the native quarters is still very much in the same state as it was sixty years ago, and that the Cairene has stood still while all the rest of the world was joining in the everlasting "move on" of modern civilisation.

We shall find this stand-still mortal in one of the main thoroughfares of the city. Leaving the European quarter behind, and taking little note of the Greek and Italian shops in the renovated Musky, we turn off to the right into the Ghurîya—one of those larger but still narrow streets which are distinguished with the name of *shâri'* or thoroughfare. Such a street is lined on either side with little box-like shops, which form an unbroken boundary on either hand, except where a mosque door, or a public fountain, or the entrance to another street interrupts for a brief space the row of stores. None of the private doors or windows we are accustomed to in Europe breaks the line of shops. For a considerable distance all the traders deal in the same commodity—be it sugar-plums or slippers. The system has its advantages, for if one dealer be too dear, the next may be cheap; and the competition of many contiguous salesmen brings about a salutary reduction in prices. On the other hand, it must be allowed that it is fatiguing to have to order your coat in half-a-dozen different places—to buy the cloth in one direction, the buttons in another, the braid in a third, the lining in a fourth, the thread in a fifth, and then to have to go to quite another place to find a tailor to cut it out and sew it together. And as each dealer has to be bargained with, and generally smoked with, if not coffeed with, if you get your coat ordered in a single morning you may count yourself expeditious.

In one of these little cupboards that do duty for shops, we may

or may not find the typical tradesman we are seeking. It may chance he has gone to say his prayers, or to see a friend, or per-

A SHOPKEEPER.

haps he did not feel inclined for business to-day; in which case the folding shutters of his shop will be closed, and as he does not

live anywhere near, and as, if he did, there is no bell, no private door, and no assistant, we may wait there for ever, so far as he is concerned, and get no answer to our inquiries. His neighbour next door, however, will obligingly inform us that the excellent man whom we are seeking has gone to the mosque, and we accordingly betake ourselves to our informer and make his acquaintance instead.

ARMOURER.

Our new friend is sitting in a recess some five feet square, and rather more than six feet high, raised a foot or two from the ground; and within this narrow compass he has collected all the wares he thinks he is likely to sell, and has also reserved room for himself and his customers to sit down and smoke cigarettes while they bargain. Of course, his stock must be very limited, but then all his neighbours are ready to help him; and if you cannot find what you want within the compass of his four walls, he will leave you with a cigarette and a cup of coffee, or perhaps Persian tea in a tumbler, while he goes to find the *desideratum* among the wares of his colleagues round about.

Meanwhile, you drink your scalding coffee—which is, however, incomparably delicious—and watch the throng that passes by: the ungainly camels, laden with brushwood or green fodder, which seem to threaten to sweep everything and everybody out of the street;—the respectable townspeople, mounted on grey or brown asses, ambling along contentedly, save when an unusually severe

blow from the inhuman donkey-boy running behind makes their beasts swerve incontinently to the right or left, as though they had a hinge in their middles;—the grandees in their two-horse carriages, preceded by breathless runners, who clear the way for their masters with shrill shouts—"Shemâlak, yâ weled!" ("To thy left, O boy!") "Yemînik, yâ Sitt!" ("To thy right, O lady!") "Iftah 'eynak, yâ Am!" ("Open thine eye, O uncle!") and the like;—the women with trays of eatables on their heads, the water-carrier with goat-skin under arm, and the vast multitude of blue-robed men and women who have something or other to do, which takes them indeed along the street, but does not take them very hurriedly. In spite of the apparent rush and crush, the crowd moves slowly, like everything else in the East.

COPPERSMITH.

Our friend returns with the desired article; we approve it, guardedly, and with cautious tentative aspect demand, "How much?" The answer is always at least twice the fair price. We reply, first by exclaiming, "I seek refuge with God" (from exorbitance), and then by offering about half the fair price. The dealer shakes his head, looks disappointed with us, shows he expected better sense in people of our appearance, puts aside his goods, and sits

down to another cigarette. After a second ineffectual bid, we summon our donkey and prepare to mount. At this moment the shopman relents, and reduces his price; but we are obdurate, and begin riding away. He pursues us, agrees almost to our terms; we return, pay, receive our purchase, commend him to the protection of God, and wend our way on.

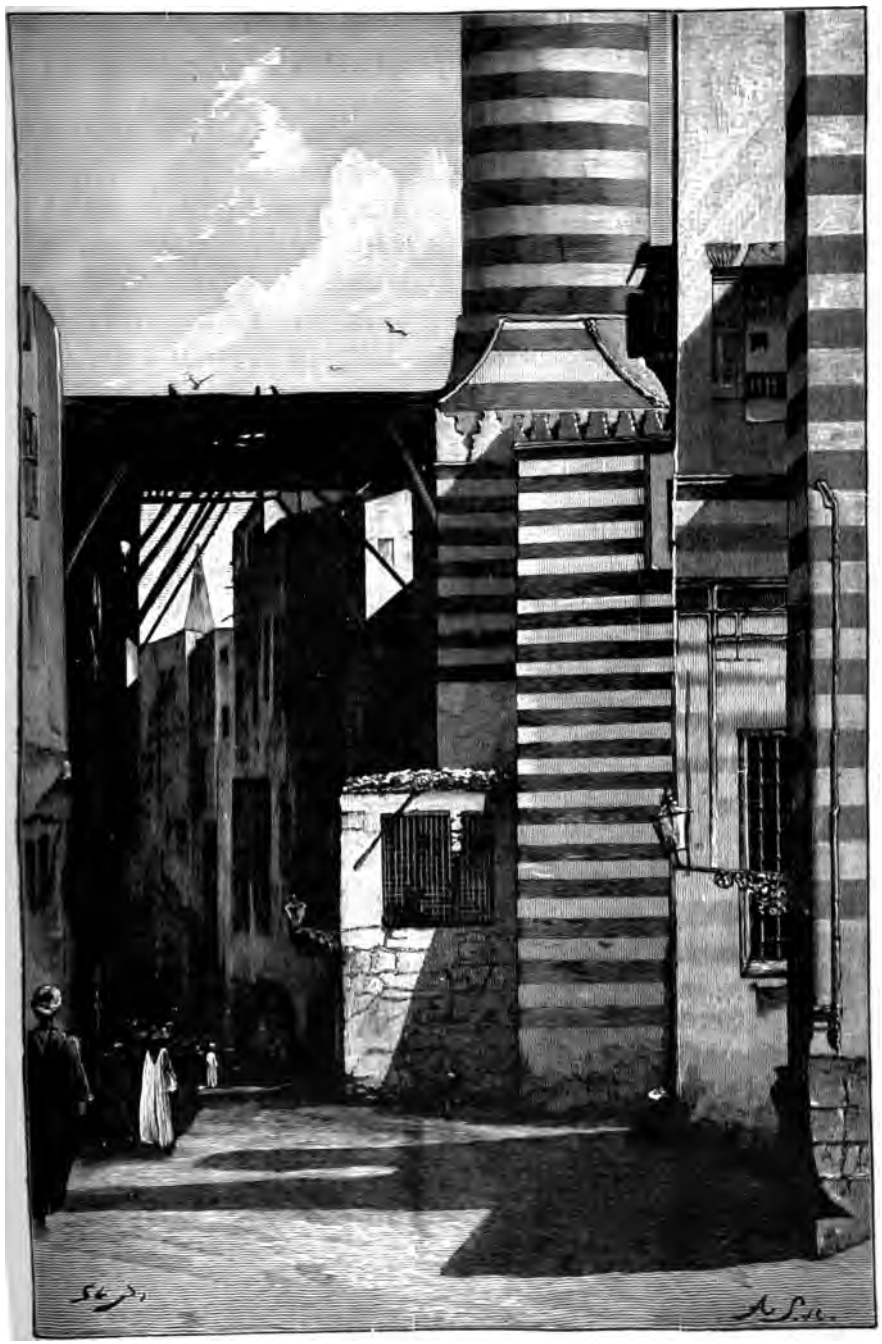
But if, instead of going on, we accompany our late antagonist in the bargain to his own home, we shall see what a middle-class Cairene house is like. Indeed, a middle-class dwelling in Cairo may sometimes chance to be a palace, for the modern Pasha despises the noble mansions that were the pride and delight of better men than he in the good old days of the Mamlûks, and prefers to live in shadeless "Route No. 29," or thereabouts, in the modern bricklayer's paradise known as the Isma'îlîya quarter; and hence the tradesman may sometimes occupy the house where some great Bey of former times held his state, and marshalled his retainers, when he prepared to strike a blow for the precarious throne that was always at the command of the strongest battalions. But all Cairene houses of the old style are very much alike: they differ only in size and in the richness or poverty of the decoration; and if our merchant's home is better than most of its neighbours, we have but to subtract a few of the statelier rooms, and reduce the scale of the others, to obtain a fair idea of the houses on either hand and round about.

The street we now enter is quite different from that we have left. We have been doing our shopping in the busy Cheapside of Cairo, and in full view of the lofty façade of the mosque of the Mamlûk Sultan El-Muayyad, which has lately been subjected to an unfinished course of questionable restoration. Its two minarets stand upon a fine old gate called Bâb Zuweyla, which people now-a-days generally prefer to call the Bâb El-Mutawelly, because it is believed to be a favourite resort of the mysterious Kutb El-Mutawelly, or pope (for the time being) of all the saints. This very holy personage is gifted with powers of invisibility and of instantaneous change of place: he flies unseen from the top of the Kaaba at

A BY-STREET.

Mekka to the Bâb Zuweyla, and there reposes in a niche behind the wooden door. True believers tell their beads as they pass this niche, and the curious peep in to see if the saint be there; and if you have a headache, there is no better cure than to drive a nail into the door; while a sure remedy for the toothache is to pull out the tooth and hang it up on the same venerated spot. Perhaps pulling the tooth out might of itself cure the ache; but the suggestion savours of sophistry, and at any rate it is safer to fix the molar up. The door bristles with unpleasing votive offerings of this sort, and if they were all successful the Kutb must be an excellent doctor.

The street thus barred by the Bâb Zuweyla is, for Cairo, a broad one; and shops, mosques, wekâlas, and fountains form its boundaries. In complete contrast, the street we are now to enter, as we turn down a by-lane and then wheel sharply to the left, has no shops, though there is a little mosque, probably the tomb of a venerated saint, at the corner. Its broad bands of red and white relieve the deep shadows of the lane, each side of which is composed of the tall backs of houses, with nothing to vary the white-washed walls except the closely grated windows. On either hand still narrower alleys open off, sometimes mere *culs-de-sac*, but often threading the city for a considerable distance. In these solitary courts we may still see the *meshrebîyas* which are becoming so rare in the more frequented thoroughfares. The best lattices are reserved for the interior windows of the house, which look on the inner court or garden; but there are still not a few streets in Cairo where the passenger still stops to admire tier upon tier and row after row of meshrebîyas which give a singularly picturesque appearance to the houses. The name is derived from the root which means to drink (which occurs in "sherbet"), and is applied to lattice windows because the porous water-bottles are often placed in them to cool. Frequently there is a little semi-circular niche projecting out of the middle of the lattice for the reception of a *kulla* or carafe. The delicately turned nobs and balls, by which the patterns of the lattice-work are formed, are sufficiently near

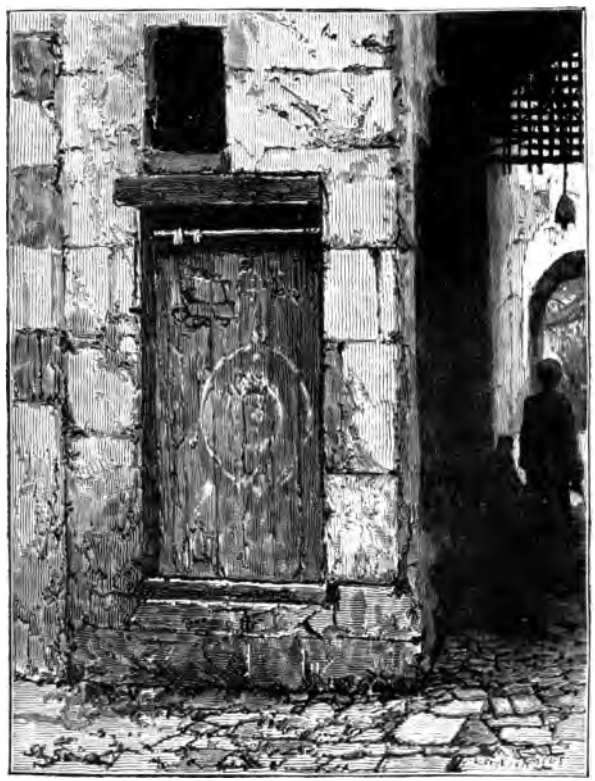


A RETIRED STREET.

together to conceal whatever passes within from the inquisitive eyes of opposite neighbours, and yet there is enough space between them to allow free access of air. A meshrebîya is indeed a cooling place for human beings as well as water-jars, and at once a convent-grating and a spying-place for the women of the harîm, who can watch their Lovelace through the meshes of the windows without being seen in return. Yet there are convenient little doors that open in the lattice-work if the inmates choose to be seen even as they see; and the fair ladies of Cairo are not always above the pardonable vanity of letting a passer-by discover that they are fair. When, as not seldom happens in the quiet by-ways, the meshrebîyas almost meet across the road, it may be questioned whether the concealment is always so complete as it is intended to be; and one can easily imagine a comfortable flirtation carried on between two proximate lattices, with the little doors ajar. This, however, is not the reason that they are disappearing so fast from the streets. The fatal opportunities they afford to a conflagration, which leaps from window to window with inconceivable speed, is the chief reason; and the high prices realised by well-made meshrebîyas when the Frank enters the market tempts many a householder to dispose of his lattice-windows. The climate of Cairo, moreover, in winter is not so warm as it used to be; and the meshrebîya is a sorry defence against a cold wind.

CORBELS SUPPORTING UPPER WINDOWS.

In one of these by-lanes we stop before an arched doorway, and tie our donkey to the ring beside it. The door is a study in itself. The upper part is surrounded by arabesque patterns, which form a square decoration above it, often very tasteful in the case of the older doorways, and not by any means ugly in quite modern



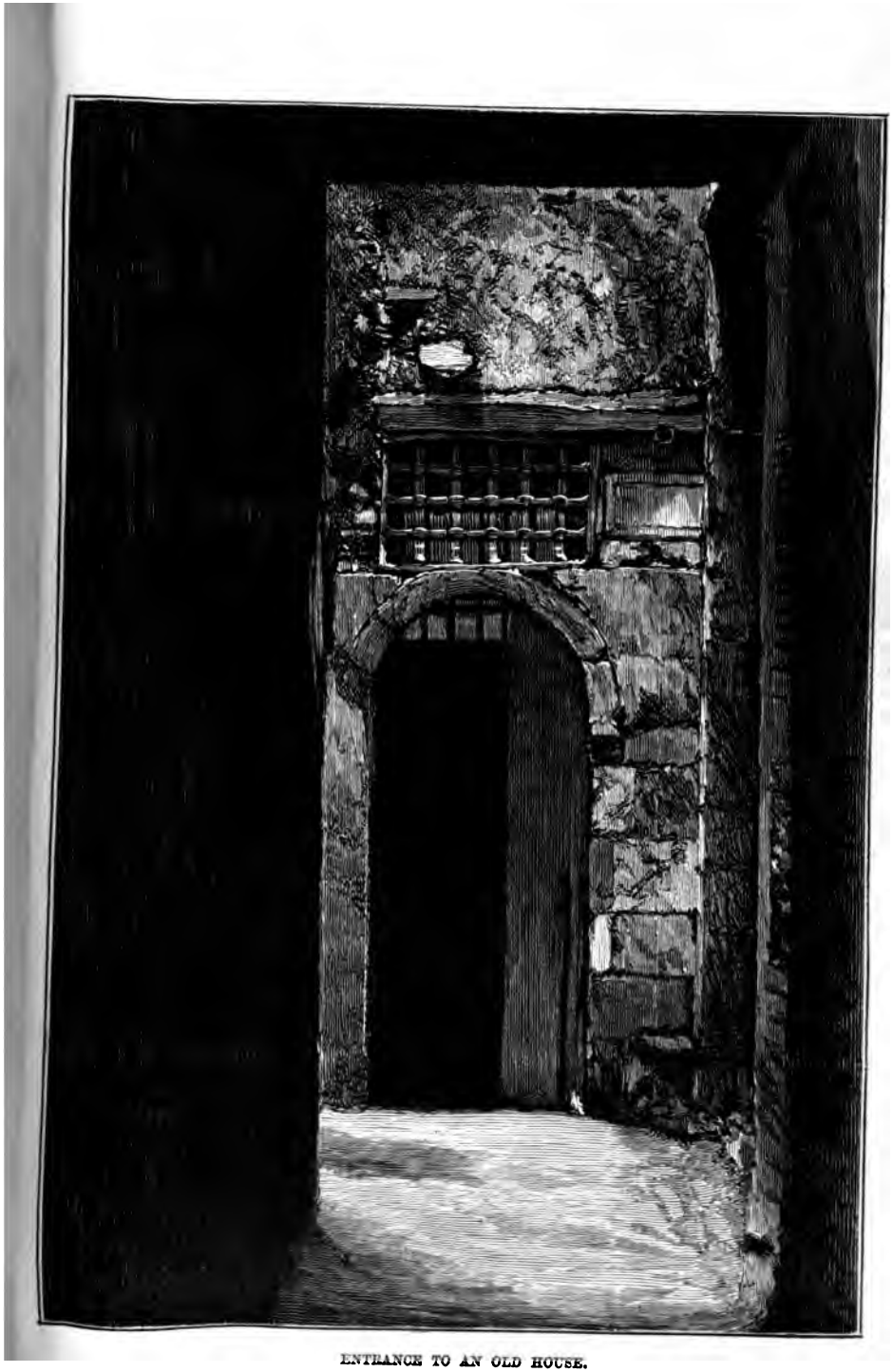
A COMMON DOOR.

buildings. Sometimes the wooden door itself has arabesques on it, and the inscription, "God is the Creator, the Eternal," which is a charm against sickness, and demons, and the "evil eye," and also serves as a *memento mori* to the master of the house whenever he comes home. There is no bell—for the prophet declared that

a bell is the devil's musical instrument, and that where a bell is the angels do not resort*—and sometimes there is no knocker, so we batter upon the door with our stick or fist. It generally takes several knockings to make oneself heard; but this is not a land where people hurry overmuch—did not our lord Mohammed, upon whom be peace, say that "haste came from the devil,"—so we conform to the ways of the land, and console ourselves with the antithetic text, "God is with the patient." At last a fumbling sound is heard on the other side, the doorkeeper is endeavouring to fit a stick with little wire pins arranged upon it in a certain order, into corresponding holes bored at the end of a deep mortice in the sliding bolt of the door. These are the key and lock of a Cairene door. The sliding bolt runs through a wooden staple on the door into a slot in the jamb. When it is home, certain movable pins drop down from the staple into holes in the sliding bolt and prevent its being drawn back. The introduction of the key with pins corresponding to the holes in the bolt lifts the movable pins and permits the bolt to be slid back. Nothing could be clumsier or more easy to pick. A piece of wax at the end of a stick will at once reveal the position of the pins, and the rest is simple.

Within is a passage, which bends sharply after the first yard or two, and thereby bars any view into the interior from the open door. In this passage the *bowwâb*, or doorkeeper, generally an old servant, ought to be found; but he is not always within earshot, or he may chance to be asleep. At the inner end of this passage we emerge into an open court, with a well of brackish water in a shady corner, and perhaps an old sycamore. On all sides the apartments of the house surround the court, and their best windows, screened with the finest lattice-work, look into it. The lower rooms, opening directly off the court, are those into which a man may walk with impunity, and no risk of meeting any of the women. Into one of these lower rooms our host conducts us, with

* See my *Speeches and Table-talk of the Prophet Mohammed*, p. 168. (Golden Treasury Series, 1882.)

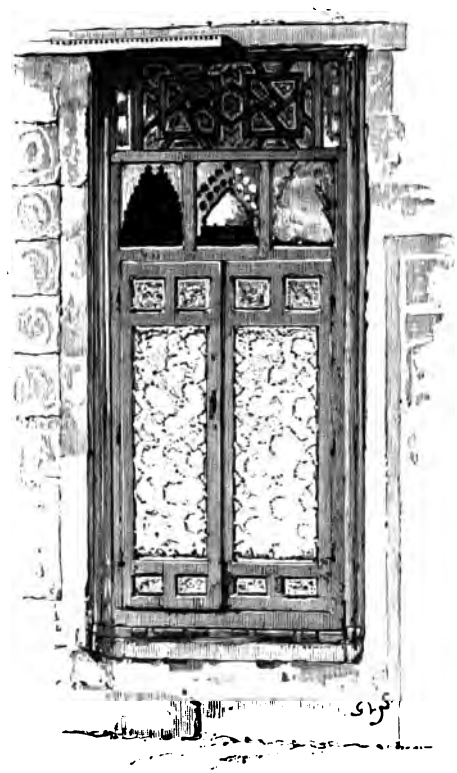


ENTRANCE TO AN OLD HOUSE.

polite entreaty to do him the honour of making ourselves at home. It is the guest-room, or *mandara*, and serves as an example of the ordinary dwelling-room of the better sort. The part of the room where we enter is of a lower level than the rest, and if it be a really handsome house we shall find this lower part paved with marble mosaic and cooled by a fountain in the middle; while opposite the door is a marble slab raised upon arches, where the water-bottles, coffee-cups, and washing materials are kept. We leave our outer shoes on the marble before we step upon the carpeted part of the room. Very generally there is a raised carpeted part on either side of the lower level, but the room we are now in has only one. It is covered with rugs, and furnished by a low divan round three sides. The end wall is filled by a meshrebîya, which is furnished within with cushions, while above it some half-dozen windows, composed of small pieces of coloured glass let into a framework of stucco, so as to form a floral pattern, admit a half-light. The two sides, whitewashed where there is neither wood nor tiles, are furnished with shallow cupboards with doors of complicated geometrical panelling—an instance of necessity being the mother of invention, for the need of panelling to avoid warping in the heat of Egypt led to the elaboration of those intricate patterns, which are so characteristic of Arab wood-work. Small arched niches on either side of the cupboards,

ARCHED CUPBOARD.

and a shelf above, are filled with jars and vases, and other ornaments. The ceiling is formed of planks laid on massive beams and generally painted a dark red, but in old houses the ceilings are often beautifully decorated. There are no tables, chairs, or fireplaces, or indeed any of the things a European understands to be furniture. When a meal is to be eaten, a little table is brought in; if the weather is cold a brazier of red-hot charcoal is kindled; instead of chairs the Cairene tucks his legs up under him on the divan—an excellent method of getting the cramp, for Europeans.



PANELLED CUPBOARD.

There is often another reception-room, raised above the ground, but entered by steps from the court, into which it looks through an open arched front; and frequently a recess in the court, under one of the upper rooms, is furnished with a divan for hot weather. A door opens out of the court into the staircase leading to the harîm rooms, and here no man but the master of the house may penetrate. "Harîm" means what is "prohibited" to other men, and what is "sacred" to the master himself. The harîm rooms are the domestic part of the house. When a man retires there, he is in the bosom of his family, and

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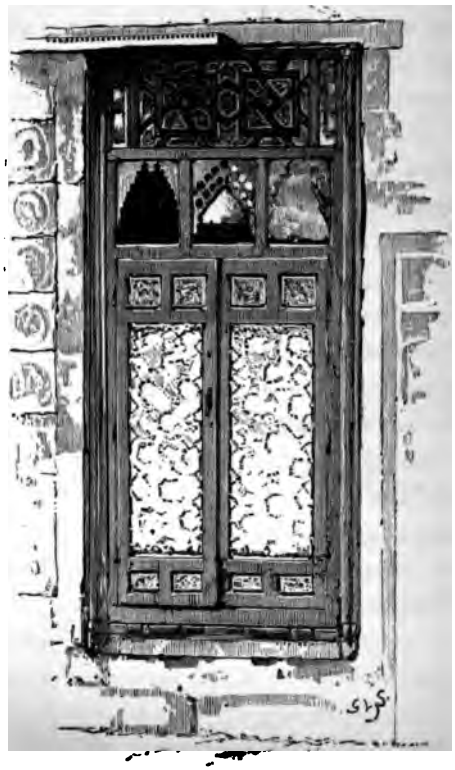

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it would need a very urgent affair to induce the doorkeeper to summon him down to anyone who called to see him. Among the harîm apartments there is generally a large sitting-room, like the mandara, called the *kâ'a*, with perhaps a cupola over it; and in front of the kâ'a is a vestibule, which serves as a ventilating and cooling place, for a sloping screen over an open space on the roof of this room is so turned as to conduct the cool north breezes into the house in hot weather; and here the family often sleep in summer.

There are no bedrooms in a Mohammedan house, or rather no rooms furnished as bedrooms, for there are plenty of separate chambers where the inmates sleep, but not one of them has any of what we conceive to be the requisites of bedroom furniture. The only fittings the Cairene asks for the night consist of a mattress and pillow, and perhaps a blanket in winter and a mosquito-net in summer, the whole of which he rolls up in the morning and deposits in some cupboard or side room; whereupon the bedroom becomes a sitting-room. There is another important department of the harîm—the bathroom—not a mere room with a fixed bath in it, but a suite of complicated heated stone apartments, exactly resembling the public Turkish baths. It is only a large house that boasts this luxury, however, and most people go out to bathe, if they care to bathe at all.

Few houses in Cairo are built higher than two stories, and the upper stories are often in a ruined and dilapidated state, with ceilings fallen in, walls bulging out and meshrebîyas dropping. Indeed, house architecture at Cairo is by no means famous for stability; houses are falling in all quarters, and leaning walls and cracked corners show that many more will follow their example. It is a terrible matter to think how little of Cairo will be standing fifty years hence. It was not built to last, and it must inevitably yield to time and its own inherent weakness.

The inhabitants of a house, such as that described, lead a dreary monotonous life: fortunately, however, they are not often conscious of its emptiness. The master rises very early, for the Muslim

DOORKEEPERS.

must say the daybreak prayers. A pipe and a cup of coffee is often all he takes before his light mid-day meal, and he generally reserves his appetite for the chief repast of the day—the supper or dinner—which he eats soon after sunset. If he is in business, he spends the day in more or less irregular attendance at his shop, smokes almost incessantly either the new-fangled Turkish cigarette, or the traditional *chibûk*, with its handsome amber mouthpiece, its long cherry-wood stem, and red-clay bowl filled with mild Gebely or Latakia tobacco. If he has no special occupation, he amuses himself with calling on his friends, or indulges in long dreamy hours in the warm atmosphere of the public bath, where the vapour of the hot-water tanks, and the dislocation of each particular joint in the shampooing, and the subsequent interval of cooling and smoking and coffee, are all exceedingly delightful in a hot climate. When he goes out, a man of any position or wealth never condescends to walk; as a rule he rides a donkey, sometimes a horse; but the donkey is far the more convenient in crowded streets. Indeed, an Egyptian ass of the best breed is a fine animal, and fetches sometimes as much as a hundred guineas; his paces are both fast and easy, and it is not difficult to write a letter on the pummel of one of these ambling mounts. The pummel is the most curious thing about the saddle; it rises sometimes nine inches or more above the seat and is covered with leather, while the rest of the saddle is padded with soft woollen stuff. The animals are very sure-footed, but if they do come down on the slimy mud that often lies deep in the principal thoroughfares, the rider, if he wisely abjures stirrups, simply stands up on his feet and waits for the donkey to rise to his level. The common method of urging the animal on is by keeping up a tattoo on his flanks with one's heels; and he is generally guided by a rap on the side of the neck or head from the stick which the rider carries, instead of by the management of the reins. An attendant runs behind, however, to keep up the pace; and in former days a great man used to employ a couple of runners, armed with long sticks (*nebbûts*), to clear the way in front; but now great men ride in

carriages, and the saïses run some yards in front of the horses. How the saïs and the ordinary donkey-boy manage to hold their own against the rapid driving and riding of their masters is a mystery. It is said they injure their health by the excessive strain, and die young; and humane people never allow the runners to go before them in long drives. Perhaps this barbaric state is necessary among a people with whom appearances count for so much; but the present width of the chief streets of Cairo has rendered it superfluous.

While their lord is paying his calls or attending to his shop, the women of his household make shift to pass the time as best they may. In spite of popular ideas on the subject, Mohammedans seldom have more than one wife, though they sometimes add to their regular marriage a left-handed connexion with an Abyssinian or other slave-girl. Efforts, however, are being made to put down the traffic in slaves, and if the trade be really suppressed, as it is already in law, the Cairene will become monogamous. The late Khedive himself set an excellent example in this, as in most other respects, and the better sort of Muslims are, to say the least, as moral as ordinary Christians. Facility of divorce is the real difficulty. Men will not keep several wives, because it costs a good deal to allow them separate houses or suites of rooms, and plurality does not conduce to domestic harmony; but they do not hesitate to divorce a wife when they are tired of her, and take a new one in her place. It is said the Khalif 'Aly thus married and divorced two hundred women in his time; and a certain dyer of Baghdâd even reached the astonishing total of nine hundred wives: he died at the good old age of eighty-five, and if he married at fifteen, he would have had a fresh spouse for every month during seventy years of conjugal felicity. Divorce was so easy that there seems no great reason why he should not have married nine thousand. One lady is said to have reduced the fatiguing ceremony of wedlock to extremely convenient dimensions. The man said to her *Khitb*, and she replied *Nikh*, and the wedding was over! Thus did she marry forty husbands, and her son Khârija was

A SAÏS, OR RUNNING FOOTMAN.

A CAIRO DONKEY BOY.

sorely puzzled to identify his father. A governor of Upper Egypt was no mean disciple of these illustrious leaders; but the habit has become more and more uncommon. European influence and increased prices have discouraged alike plurality of wives and divorce.

There would be much more excuse for the women to demand polyandria than for the men to ask for polygynaecia; for while the husband can go about and enjoy himself as he pleases, the women of his family are often hard pushed to it to find any diversion in their dull lives. Sometimes they make up a party and engage a whole public bath; and then the screams of laughter bear witness how the girls of Egypt enjoy a romp. Or else the mistress goes in state to call upon some friends, mounted upon the high ass, enveloped in a balloon of black silk, her face concealed, all but the eyes, by a white veil, and attended by a trusty man-servant. These visits to other harîms are the chief delights of the ladies of Cairo: unlimited gossip, sweetmeats, inspection of toilettes, perhaps some singers or dancers to hear and behold—these are their simple joys. They have no education whatever, and cannot understand higher or more intellectual pleasures than those their physical senses can appreciate: to eat, to dress, to chatter, to sleep, to dream away the sultry hours on a divan, to stimulate their husband's affections and keep him to themselves—this is to *live*, in a harîm. An Englishwoman asked an Egyptian lady how she passed her time. "I sit on this sofa," she answered, "and when I am tired, I cross over and sit on that." Embroidery is one of the few occupations of the harîm; but no lady thinks of busying herself with the flower-garden which is often attached to the house. Indeed, the fair houris we imagine, behind the lattice-windows of the harîm, are very dreary, uninteresting people; they know nothing, and take but an indifferent interest in anything that goes on; they are just beautiful—a few of them—and nothing more.

Of course, the stranger does not see the true "Light of the Harîm" at all: the only women who will show themselves un-

A WATCHMAN.

veiled to him are those of the lower orders, and the peculiar caste of Ghawâzy, or dancing-girls. The forms of the peasant women are often singularly noble and well developed; but their faces are not striking, except for the lustrous eyes. The Ghawâzy are, so far as I have seen them, uniformly ugly and repulsive. But neither of these is a type of oriental loveliness; the beautiful Circassians, "sights to dream of, not to tell," the warm-skinned Gallas, and the other beauties of the rich man's harîm, are not to be viewed by the profane eyes of strangers. It is true the modern belle is not quite so particular about hiding her charms as her grandmother was, and is; the wives of pashas now drive along the Shubra road, on Friday and Sunday afternoons, with the thin gauze yashmak of Constantinople, instead of the opaque white veil of Egypt. Still, we hardly get a good look at them, and must go to the native essayists to learn what a woman's beauty ought to be to fulfil the demands of Arab taste.

OLD WINDOW.

Although ladies' figures in Egypt tend alarmingly towards *embonpoint*, the weighty fair of central Africa is not the Arab ideal of beauty. The maid of enchanting loveliness, to whom poets and Khalifs devoted their most passionate lays and vows, is contrariwise slenderly graceful, "like the twig of the oriental willow." Her face is like the full moon, and her dusky locks fall in a cascade to her waist. A mole, like a drop of ambergris upon a ruby, enhances the fascination of her blush. Her large almond eyes are intensely black and brilliant, but softened by long silken lashes, "giving a tender and languid

expression that is full of enchantment, and scarcely to be improved by the adventitious aid of the black border of Kohl, which the lovely maiden adds rather for the sake of fashion than

DOORWAY.

necessity, having what the Arabs term 'natural Kohl.' The eyebrows are thin and arched, the forehead is wide and fair as ivory; the nose straight; the mouth small; the lips of a brilliant red, and the teeth 'like pearls set in coral.' The forms of the bosom

are compared to two pomegranates; the waist is slender; the hips are wide and large; the feet and hands small; the fingers tapering, and their extremities dyed with the deep orange-red imparted by the leaves of the henna. The maid in whom these charms are combined exhibits a lively image of 'the rosy-fingered Aurora'; her lover knows neither night nor sleep in her presence, and the constellations of heaven are no longer seen by him when she approaches." *

Such was the Arabian beauty of the poets, in the romantic days when an imaginative swain fell in love with the mere impress of a lady's hand upon the wall, and died because he could not win her, and when the Khalîf Yezîd refused to commit his dead mistress to the grave, but continued to kiss and caress her till, speechless with grief, he gave up the ghost. There was plenty of genuine love-making in the good old times, but perhaps the habit has died out. At all events in these degenerate days the great pashas of the East have acquired a meretricious taste for mere coquetry in their mistresses; they want to be amused and teased, as well as charmed. Hence, they sometimes seek their partners in Europe, and the following translation of a Turkish ode in praise of Greek girls shows that the Ottoman taste inclines to the *coulisses* order of feminine accomplishments:

. . . If a mistress thou should'st seek
Then I pray thee let thy loved one be a Greek.
Unto her the fancies of the joyous bend,
For there's leave to woo the Grecian girl, my friend!
Caskets of coquetry are the Grecian maids,
And their grace the rest of womankind degrades.
What that slender waist, so delicate and slight!
What those gentle words the sweet tongue doth indite!
What those blandishments, that heart-attracting talk!
What that elegance, that heart-attracting walk!
What that figure, as a cypress, tall and free,
In the park of God's creation a young tree!
Given those disdainful airs to her alone,
And her legacy—that accent and that tone?

* *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages*, pp. 214, 215. (1883.)

Strung the regal pearls of her enchanting speech,
Pounded seemed they when her gentle mouth they reach.
Moving lithely, she from side to side will turn,
That the hearts of all her lovers she may burn.
That cap which on one side she daily wears,
That jaunty step, those joyous heedless airs;
Those motions—they are just to our delight:
And her tripping on two toes, how fair a sight!
'Twas as though with fire her pathway were inlaid,
That would burn the feet of yonder moonlight maid.
Thou would'st deem her lovers' hearts upon her way,
Burning with their love for her, all scattered lay.*

A young lady, such as the Ottoman poet imagines, exists no doubt in many an Egyptian harîm; but she does not impart her peculiar graces to her native sisters. In truth the Egyptian ladies cannot venture to give themselves airs; they suffer from the low opinion which all Mohammedans entertain of the fair sex. The unalterable iniquity of womankind is an incontrovertible fact among the men of the East; it is part of their religion. Did not the blessed Prophet say, "I stood at the gate of Paradise, and lo! most of its inhabitants were the poor: and I stood at the gates of Hell, and lo! most of its inhabitants were women"? Is it not, moreover, a physiological fact that woman was made out of a *crooked* rib of Adam; which would break if you tried to bend it, and if you left it alone it would always remain crooked? And is it not related that when the Devil heard of the creation of woman, he laughed with delight, and said, "Thou art half of my host, and thou art the depositary of my secret, and thou art my arrow with which I shoot and miss not!" It is no wonder that a learned doctor gave advice to his disciple, before he entered upon any serious undertaking, to consult ten intelligent persons among his particular friends, or if he have not more than five such friends, let him consult each of them twice; or if he have not more than one friend, he should consult him ten times, at ten different visits; if he have not one to consult, let him return to his wife and consult her, and whatever she advises him to do, let him do the contrary: so shall he proceed

* E. J. W. Gibb: *Ottoman Poetry*, pp. 142-144. (1882.)

rightly in his affair and attain his object. Following in the steps of this pious Father, the Muslims have always treated women as an inferior order of beings, necessary indeed, and ornamental, but certainly not entitled to respect or deference. Hence they rarely educate their daughters; hence they seek in their wives beauty and docility, and treat them either as pretty toys, to be played with and broken and cast away, or as useful links in the social economy, good to bear children and order a household. But to regard them as helpmeets, to share with them his troubles and hopes, to repose in their consolation, and rouse himself under their encouragement and counsel, are ideas which could not enter a Muslim's head. The wife, except among a few Europeanised Turks, is in Egypt always part of a lower creation.

Egyptian society has its undoubted merits. The original principle of a universal equality and fraternity among true believers, preached by Mohammed, still retains much of its force. Rich men are not respected simply on account of their wealth, and the poor man feels himself the equal in all essential respects of his richer neighbour. The differences of rank are much less glaring in the East than in Europe. There is also no doubt that in the matter of polite manners the Egyptian could give lessons to his Western contemporary. But in the essentials of civilisation the Egyptians have everything to learn. In education they generally lack the rudiments, and in the higher departments of morals they have hardly made a beginning. The fatal spot in Mohammedanism is the position of woman. Women in the East are the rich man's toys and the poor man's drudges. Their whole training is one vast blunder. They are brought up with the sole aim and object of getting a husband, and the objectionable acquirements of the Ghawâzy dancing girls are held up to them as the fittest qualifications of a wife. They are completely secluded from the other sex save in the cases of their own intimate relations, and never see a strange man without the motive of marriage. The degraded view of womanhood taken by women themselves of course reacts upon the men. To them a woman is desirable solely on account

of her sex, and any ideal of chivalry, so potent an element in the noblest manhood, becomes impossible in the Muslim social state. And this false relation between husband and wife makes itself felt in the bringing up of children. The early years of childhood, perhaps the most critical in a whole life, are tainted by the corrupt influences of the harîm, where the boy learns that sensual attitude towards women which is the curse of his after life, and the girl acquires those abandoned notions of the requirements of the opposite sex which spoil her for the highest functions of womanhood. The refining power of a lady is seldom possessed or exercised in the East. The restraining and purifying influence of wife on husband, of mother on child, of a hostess upon her guests, is never felt in a Mohammedan state. In a word, the finest springs of society are wanting.

The worst of this deplorable state of things is that there seems no reasonable prospect of improvement. The Mohammedan social system is so thoroughly bound up with the religion that it appears an almost hopeless task to attempt to separate the two. Undoubtedly very little of the social system is to be found in the Korân, but as much may be said of many points in both the doctrines and ritual of Islâm, and it is often to these very points that the Muslim is most devotedly attached. It is seldom that the original character of a religion remains unchanged for any great length of time. What was vital and supreme in the eyes of the first preacher becomes a matter of secondary importance to his later disciples, while a trifling detail in the original creed, or it may be a later accretion of doubtful authority, gradually develops into the "one thing needful." It is so with Islâm: the trivial observances of the founder have acquired an even greater sanctity than the dogmas he expounded, and the social system he allowed has become so thoroughly a part of the religion that the permissions of divorce and polygamy are regarded by all but the very few as equally divine with the declaration of the unity of God. As long as the Mohammedan religion exists the social life with which it has unfortunately become associated will probably survive; and whilst the

latter prevails in Egypt we cannot expect the higher results of civilisation. The conclusion is doubtless a melancholy one, but it were idle to allow the unrivalled picturesqueness of Egyptian life to blind us to the really diseased condition of Muslim society. Until Egyptian women are raised to a higher knowledge of their duties and influence, and are better trained to exercise them, the most determined optimist cannot expect to discover "sweetness and light" in Egypt.

CHAPTER VI

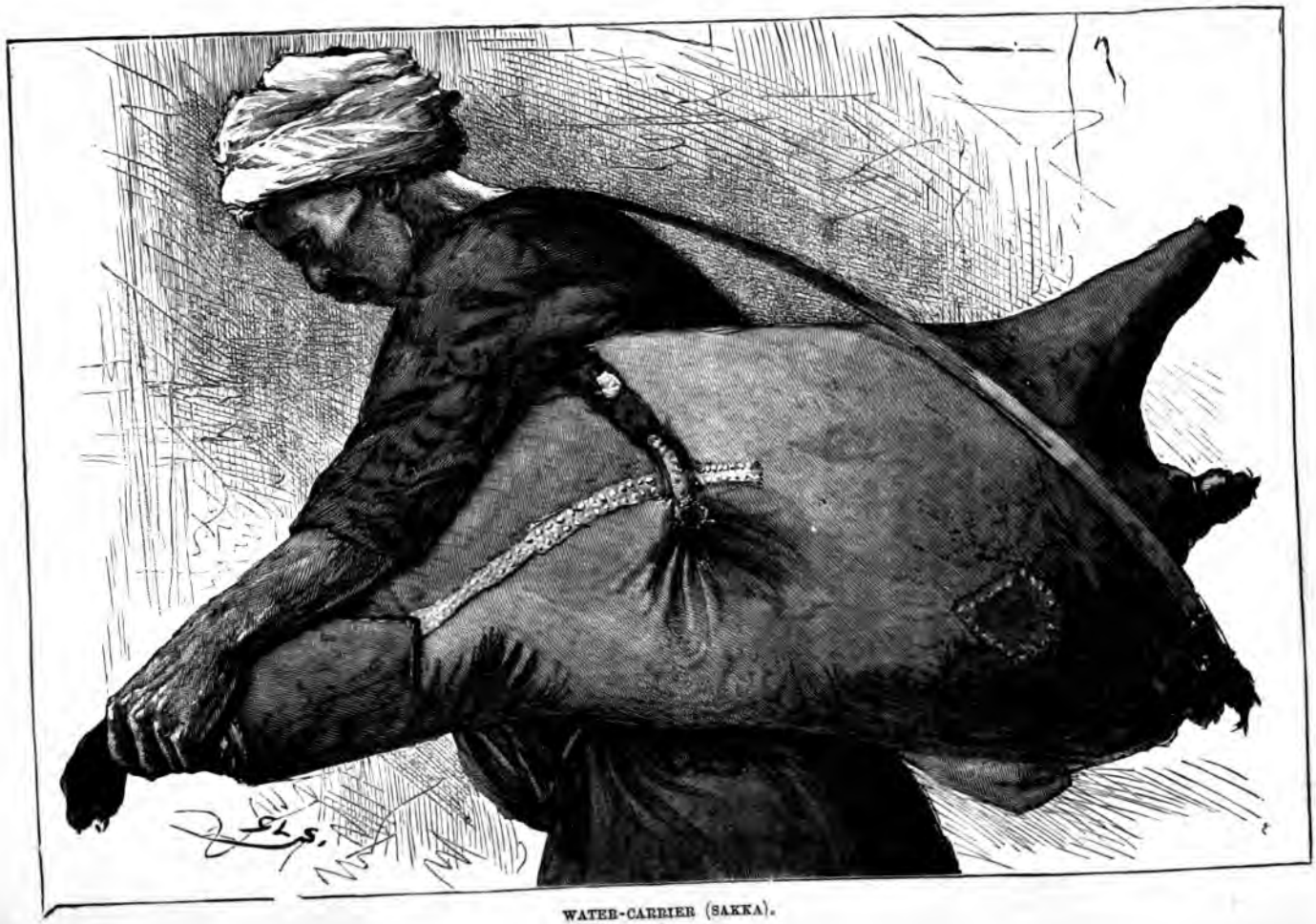
THE REVELS OF ISLAM

Among the pleasures which the wife does not necessarily share with her husband are those of the table. She may not eat with her lord unless he call her, and he often devours a solitary meal. The Egyptian is no gourmet, and his dinner-parties are very simple affairs. After water has been poured over their hands, the guests seat themselves on the ground, or on the corners of the divan, so as to surround a large tinned tray which has already been placed upon a little inlaid table and furnished with large cakes of bread, spoons, and glasses or cups, but no tablecloth, knives or forks. The cakes of bread serve as plates, our fingers as knives and forks, with frequent recourse to napkins. After saying "in the name of God" (*bism-illah*), the host begins the repast by plunging his spoon into the bowl of soup, and the guests follow his example: the spoons plying between the one bowl and the several mouths with beautiful impartiality. Then some made-dishes are brought in, and each man arms himself with a little piece of bread, and holding it to the edge of the dish draws a portion of meat upon it with the thumb and first two fingers of his right hand—the left is never used at meals except in cases of extreme necessity—and conveys it to his mouth. The operation is a really clean and tidy one in polite society and with most dishes. It is not, however, very easy to carry a load of haricot beans, done in oil, to the mouth without a slip; and food that has to be conveyed gingerly also requires to be deposited well inside the lips: so that a fastidious

European cannot help reflecting with horror on the number of fingers that go right into the mouths, and then are all dipped again in the same dish. A more unpleasant sight, however, to the uninitiated is the management of the whole lamb, which generally forms the *pièce de résistance* of an Egyptian banquet. This is one of

BRASS EWER AND BASIN FOR WASHING, AND COFFEE-TRAY WITH CUPS.

those cases of sheer necessity where the left hand may be brought into use, but some fine carvers can dispense with it even here. The operator thrusts his two thumbs deep into the flesh of the lamb, and then grubbing with his fingers tears out huge shapeless hunks, *disjecta membra*, and hands them in his fists, shining with



WATER-CARRIER (SAKKA).

grease, to each of the guests. It is one of the most awful sights that the Western stomach has to assimilate in Oriental gastronomy. The rending and mauling of the lamb, and the view of the successive coatings of different varieties of grease and of juice, hot and cold, savoury and sweet, accumulated, like arrears of wall-paper, one upon the other, on the same brown fingers and thumb, are, however, the only seriously trying parts of an Arab dinner. The cooking is generally admirable, the variety of dishes surprising, and as soon as one has grown accustomed to the principle of having mouths in common, there is no doubt that a *dîner à l'arabe* is infinitely preferable to the pseudo-French dinners one gets at the hotels. Among ordinary dishes are the following:—"Lamb or mutton cut into small pieces and stewed with various vegetables, and sometimes with peaches, apricots, or jujubes, and sugar; cucumbers, or small gourds, or the fruit of the black or white egg plant, stuffed with rice and minced meat, vine-leaves, or pieces of lettuce leaf or cabbage leaf, enclosing a similar composition; small morsels of lamb or mutton, roasted on skewers, and called *kebâb;* fowls simply roasted or boiled, or boned and stuffed with raisins, pistachio-nuts, crumbled bread and parsley; and various kinds of pastry. The repast is frequently opened with soup, and is generally ended with boiled rice, mixed with a little butter, and seasoned with salt and pepper; and after this is served a water-melon or other fruit, or a bowl of a sweet drink composed of water with raisins, and sometimes other kinds of fruit, boiled in it, and then sugar with a little rosewater added to it when cool." Many of these dishes and preparations are delicious, and it is a marvel that Europeans living in the East do not more commonly adopt them.

An Arab dinner is a very sedate affair; only water is drunk with it—"champagne du Nil," as our host at Luxor facetiously called it; and it is not often that music or laughter enlivens the banquet, though a hired singer is sometimes introduced on great occasions. It was not thus with the feasts in "the golden prime of the good Harûn Er-Rashîd," nor with the revels of many another epoch of

Mohammedan history, as described in the writings of the revellers themselves. Wine was no less forbidden then than now, but a Poet-Khalif, all unabashed, could write:—

I run to the wine-cup at morning, I take the same journey o'nights:
On my life, I can see no harm in a deed which my soul delights;
And one whom mine eyes confound with the moon, as she shines at the full—
Who is human, indeed, but of humankind the most beautiful—
Tendered me wine from the hand and wine from the honeyed lips,
And made me alone twice drunk in a circle of ripe.
My comrades are all asleep ere my eyelids begin to sink,
Yet I am the first of them all to run for my morning drink.

These lines belong to the four-bottle age of Arabian toping, a time when every man in the charmed circle had "his ain pint stoup," and emptied it pretty often. The Arabs were ever vulgar epicures, they did not understand refined gluttony, and frankly ate to get full and drank to get drunk, though, as we have seen, they prepared themselves carefully for the entertainment, put on their best clothes and scented their beards and dress. And when they were thus arrayed, and surrounded as men should be who mean to be festive, they set to their work with an astonishing will. The huge banquets chronicled in Arabic histories seem incredible. In one case we read of a table laid with twenty-one immense dishes, each of which contained twenty-one baked sheep, three years old and fat, and three hundred and fifty pigeons and fowls, heaped up to a man's height and cased in sweetmeat; while between these large chargers, five hundred lesser dishes held each seven fowls and a quantity of sweetmeats; and two huge sugary edifices, each weighing near a ton, were brought in on shoulder-poles. At such a feast a man might eat his sheep or two without attracting remark. It needed a good deal of liquid to wash down repasts of this heroic model, and there is reason to believe that the Muslims of those days did not spare the cellars of "the famous Nushîrwân the Good." There is indeed a case on record of a man who became so intoxicated that he vowed he would not budge until he had embraced the moon, and, persisting in extending loving arms towards that luminary, fell and broke

his nose; and, on being informed of the cause of this disaster next morning, resolved never again to taste a liquor that could make such a fool of a man. But this penitent was an exception: Muslims in general do not understand the pleasure of drinking without getting actually drunk, and it must be feared that most of the feasts of the Golden Prime at Baghdâd ended if not under the table, at least upon the floor.

"Wine is the body, music the soul, and joy is their offspring," says the pious judge who wrote in Arabic *The Race of the Ruby*, a famous but highly indecorous history of toping; and the banquet was not complete without the presence of the "heavenly Maid." The Khalifs themselves were no mean hands at a song. Reclining on a bed of narcissus under the full moon, drinking the red wine, and elaborating an ode to a black or white slave, seem to have been the everyday work of many of these spiritual lords of Islâm. El-Mahdy, the third 'Abbâsy Khalif, sums up the ideal life of a Mohammedan pontiff in these lines:

O Allah, make my pleasures mellow
With Abû-Hafs my table-fellow!
The best enjoyment that one knows
From rosy lips and liquor flows,
From perfumed houris' amorous play,
Whenas they lilt the roundelay.

The voices of singing-men and singing-women added to the delights of the feast; and the intervals of song were enlivened by the sallies of a wit—no mere punster, though he could pun on occasion, but a man of letters, well stored with the literature of the Arabs, able to finish a broken quotation, gifted with taste and discrimination in his compositions, and with a sweet voice to sing or recite them. Such a man could bring about a revolution, or the downfall of a powerful minister. So intense was the devotion of Khalifs and Vizîrs to poetry and song, that they could refuse nothing to the poet who pleased them. A beggar who gave an answer in a neatly turned verse would find his jar filled with gold; and a good repartee would cram the mouth that uttered it

with jewels, and load the speaker's back with costly dresses. One poet left behind him, at his death, a hundred complete court suits, two hundred shirts, and five hundred state turbans. Twenty or

A CAFÉ IN THE SUBURBS.

thirty thousand gold pieces were given for a single couplet. The story is told of the poet Hammâd, that the Khalif Hishâm sent for him and bade him recall a certain verse of which his master could

only remember the last word. Hammâd at once recited it, and the Khalif ordered one of the two lovely slaves who stood in waiting, to bring wine. They both drank, and, whether it was the wine or the girl who served it, Hammâd declared he lost a third of his reason. The Khalif told him to say the lines again, and then a second bumper was brought, and Hammâd said, "O Prince of the Faithful, two-thirds of my reason have departed from me!" Hishâm laughed and advised him to ask what he would before the remaining third was gone. "One of those girls," cried the poet; and the Khalif replied, "Nay, but both are thine, and all they possess, and fifty thousand pieces of gold to boot." "I kissed the ground before him," says Hammâd, "and drank a third cup, and was unconscious of what happened after"; till he awoke next morning and found the Khalif had been even better than his word.

Ibrahîm El-Môsily, the famous musician, who assisted at so many of Harûn Er-Rashîd's carousals, as all readers of "The Thousand and One Nights" remember, received from his master a hundred and fifty thousand silver dirhems (of about the value of francs) as a first fee, a monthly allowance of ten thousand francs, and occasional presents, which sometimes reached the sum of a hundred thousand francs for a single song; he was also allowed the produce of certain farms, three sheep a day for his kitchen, besides birds, three thousand francs a month for fruits and perfumes, and a thousand a month for clothes. And he spent it! When he died, there was not enough money to cover his debts.

The following story of an evening spent by another famous singer, Mukhârik, will give a fair idea of how life was understood in the Golden Prime of Arabian Society. The singer tells it himself:—

"After drinking with the Khalif a whole night, I asked his permission to take the air in the Rusâfa quarter of Baghdâd, which he granted; and while I was walking there, I saw a damsel, who appeared as if the rising sun beamed from her face. She had a basket, and I followed her. She stopped at a fruiterer's, and bought some fruit; and, observing that I was following her, she

looked back and abused me several times; but still I followed her, until she arrived at a great door, after having filled her basket with fruits and flowers and similar things. When she had entered, and the door was closed behind her, I sat down opposite to it, deprived of my reason by her beauty, and knew that there must be in the house a wine-party. The sun went down upon me while I sat there; and at length there came two handsome young men on asses, and they knocked at the door, and when they were admitted, I entered with them; the master of the house thinking that I was their companion, and they imagining that I was one of his friends. A repast was brought up, and we ate, and washed our hands, and were perfumed. The master of the house then said to the young men, 'Have ye any desire that I should call such a one?' (mentioning a woman's name). They answered, 'If thou wilt grant us the favour, well.' So he called for her, and she came, and lo! she was

PLAYERS ON THE RABÂB, OR VIOL, USED TO ACCOMPANY RECITERS OF ROMANCES.

the maiden whom I had seen before, and who had abused me. A servant-maid preceded her, bearing her lute, which she placed on her lap. Wine was then brought, and she sang, while we drank, and shook with delight. 'Whose air is that?' they asked. She answered, 'My master Mukhârik's.' She then sang another air, which she said was also mine, while they drank by pints; she looking aside and doubtfully at me, until I lost my patience, and called out to her to do her best; but in attempting to do so, singing a third air, she overstrained her voice, and I said, 'Thou hast made a mistake:'—upon which she threw the lute from her lap in anger, so that she nearly broke it, saying, 'Take it thyself, and let us hear thee.' I answered, 'Well:' and, having taken it and tuned it perfectly, sang the first of the airs which she had sung before me; whereupon all of them sprang upon their feet and kissed my head. I then sang the second air, and the third; and their reason almost fled with ecstasy. The master of the house, after asking his guests and being told by them that they knew me not, came to me, and kissing my hand, said, 'By Allah, my master, who art thou?' I answered, 'By Allah, I am the singer Mukhârik!'—'And for what purpose,' said he, kissing both my hands, 'camest thou hither?' I replied, 'As a sponger,'—and related what had happened with respect to the maiden: whereupon he looked towards his two companions, and said to them, 'Tell me, by Allah, do ye not know that I gave for that girl thirty thousand dirhems, and have refused to sell her?' They answered, 'It is so.' Then said he, 'I take you as witnesses that I have given her to him.'—'And we,' said the two friends, 'will pay thee two-thirds of her price.' So he put me in possession of the girl, and in the evening, when I departed, he presented me with rich dresses and other gifts, with all of which I went away; and as I passed the places where the maiden had abused me, I said to her, 'Repeat thy words to me;' but she could not for shame. Holding the girl's hand I went with her immediately to the Khalif, whom I found in anger at my long absence; but when I had related my story to him, he was surprised, and laughed, and ordered that the master

of the house and his two friends should be brought before him, that he might requite them: to the former he gave forty thousand dirhems, to each of his two friends thirty thousand, and to me a hundred thousand; and I kissed his feet and departed."*

These jovial experiences are past and gone. They were always stolen joys, and were reprobated by the God-fearing: for Mohammed the prophet was not musical, and regarded musical instruments as engines of the Devil. Good Muslims, therefore, should have no ear. Whether it be in consequence of increased piety or increased stupidity, the modern Egyptian certainly has forgotten how to enjoy himself in the unholy manner of his ancestors; or rather he has sobered a good deal in his way of enjoyment, and takes it less often and in strict moderation. For the singers and performers are still to be heard in Egypt. I have listened to the sweetest piping in the world in a dervîsh mosque in Cairo, and some wonderful fiddling on the *kemenga*, at Thebes. There is the class of 'Almas, or singing women, who follow their art with considerable success, and whose singing has a strange charm to those who can accustom their ears to the peculiar intervals of the Arab scale and the weird modulations of the dirge-like melodies. Sometimes one of these 'Almas—whose respectable profession must not be confused with the voluptuous trade of the dancing-girls—is hired to sing after a dinner party;

PORTER.

* *Halbet El-Kumeyt*, or *Race of the Ruby*, quoted in *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages*, pp. 173—76.

but, as a rule, all musical and other entertainments are reserved for those special occasions when the Egyptian makes it a matter of conscience to revel,—such as marriage feasts and the periodical festivals of the Muslim Kalendar. It is then that parties of 'Almas are engaged to sing; groups of wanton Ghawâzy dancers are introduced into the presence of decent women, to entertain them with their ungraceful and suggestive writhings; and clowns and buffoons are employed to divert the guests with their grotesque and generally obscene fooling, just as they diverted the ancestors of these very people in the days of the Pharaohs. As a quiet English citizen, who goes to his work every day and to his doze every evening, and hates the thought of a theatre, considers it his bounden duty to launch out into untold extravagance on the occasion of his daughter's wedding, so the Egyptian, however poor he is, will rather pay cent. per cent. interest all his life, than not borrow enough money to celebrate his own or his family's weddings with pomp and revelry.

An Egyptian wedding is a very curious performance. In the first place, you must not think of seeking a wife yourself. Young ladies in the East are not wooed in person, and no lover's eyes may see his mistress until he has married her. Modesty, according to Mohammedan ideas, is incompatible with visibility, and if young men and maidens do happen to see each other's faces, "the curse of God is on the seer and the seen." "The best of women," said the blessed Fâtima, daughter of the Prophet, "is she who sees not men, and whom they see not." Hence the would-be bridegroom must act through an intermediary. Probably, however, you will not have to trouble yourself in the matter: your excellent father, following the example of Abraham, who sent out a faithful servant to bring back a wife for his son Isaac (with results, it must be allowed, which were hardly a success), will betake himself to the Cairene equivalent of a registry-office, namely, an old woman called a *khâtiba*, or "betrother," who is in fact a sort of perambulating "Matrimonial Herald," and knows exactly who wants to marry off a daughter and how much he will take for her. For

A WEDDING PARTY.

the next thing, after the report of the old woman, is the question of the dowry, which is an essential part of every marriage, and is settled by the bridegroom on the bride, together with her own personal effects, furniture, dresses, and the rest. Twenty pounds, however, form an average dowry, and even five shillings will satisfy the law. You will pay down two-thirds on the spot, and it will be used for the bride's *trousseau*. The rest is to be paid on the occasion of the betrothal or marriage contract, which generally takes place a week or so before the actual wedding, though some betrothals are made in the childhood of the contracting parties. This betrothal is a religious ceremony, and it is as well to choose a propitious time, like the month of Shawwâl, for its performance. The Kâdy and two witnesses are summoned, the bridegroom and the bride's father meet, and after magnifying God, invoking blessings on the Prophet, and reciting passages from the Korân, the bridegroom pays the balance of the dowry, and then, sitting down opposite the bride's father, grasps his hands. A handkerchief is then thrown over the joined hands, and the father of the bride says, "I betroth to thee my daughter [Âmna], the virgin, for a dowry of [twenty pounds];" to which the bridegroom answers, "I accept her betrothal from thee." Thus the contract is completed, and everybody recites the Fâtiha, or opening chapter of the Korân:—

> Praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds!
> The Compassionate, the Merciful!
> King of the Day of Judgment!
> Thee we worship, and Thee we ask for help.
> Guide us in the straight way,
> The way of those to whom Thou art gracious;
> Not of those upon whom is Thy wrath, nor of the erring. Amen.

The legal part of the marriage being thus arranged, the festivities soon follow. A string of camels brings the bride's furniture to her future husband's house; and the bridegroom gives his farewell bachelor banquets to his friends. For several nights his house is bright with lamps, and gay with little red and green flags, hung on cords stretched across the street. Now, if ever, the

excesses of the Golden Prime are reproduced. Singers charm the ears of the guests, dancers excite their desires, and Arabian cookery, disdaining the Prophet's frugal example of interpreting the fatted calf by a single goat, tempts the palates of the revellers with its choicest dishes. *Wein, Weib, und Gesang* are the order of the day, unless the bridegroom be one of those excellent souls who cannot imagine a cheerfuller mode of entertaining their friends than having the Korân chanted from cover to cover by hired reciters. Whether the programme be sacred or profane, no one who is asked dare refuse to come and join in the rejoicings. "On the day preceding that on which she is conducted to the bridegroom's house, the bride goes to the public bath, accompanied by a number of her female relations and friends. The procession generally pursues a circuitous route, for the sake of a greater display, and on leaving the house, turns to the right. In Cairo the bride walks under a canopy of silk, borne by four men, with one of her near female relations on each side of her. Young unmarried girls walk before her; these are preceded by the married

WATER BOTTLE.

ladies, and the procession is headed and closed by a few musicians with drums and hautboys. The bride wears a kind of pasteboard crown or cap, and is completely veiled from the view of spectators by a cashmere shawl placed over her crown and whole person, but some handsome ornaments of the head are attached externally. The other women are dressed in the best of their walking attire. In the case, however, of a bride of high rank, or of wealth, and often in the case of one belonging to a family of the middle class, the ladies ride upon high saddled asses, without music or canopy; and the bride is distinguished only by a cashmere shawl, instead of the usual black silk covering, one or more eunuchs sometimes riding at the head. In the bath, after the ordinary operations of washing, &c., a feast is made, and the party are often entertained by female singers. Having returned in the same manner to her home, the bride's friends there partake of a similar entertainment with her. Her hands and feet are then stained with hennâ, and her eyes ornamented with kohl, and her friends give her small presents of money, and take their leave. 'It is a Sunna ordinance that the bride wash her feet in a clean vessel, and sprinkle the waters in the corners of the chambers, that a blessing may result from this. She should also brighten her face, and put on the best of her apparel, adorn her eyes with kohl, and stain her hands and feet with hennâ; and she should abstain during the first week from anything that contains mustard, and from vinegar and sour apples.'

"The bride is conducted to the house of the bridegroom on the following day, in the same manner as to the bath, or with more pomp. In Cairo the bridal processions of people of very high rank are conducted with singular display. The train is usually headed by buffoons and musicians, and a water-carrier, loaded with a goat's-skin filled with sand and water, of very great weight, which is often borne for many hours before, as well as during, the procession, merely to amuse the spectators by this feat of strength. Then follow (interrupted by groups of male or female dancers, jugglers, and the like) numerous decorated open waggons or cars,

STREET SCENE.

each of which contains several members of some particular trade or art engaged in their ordinary occupations, or one such person with attendants:—in one, for instance, a Kahwejy, with his assistants and pots and cups and fire, making coffee for the spectators; in a second, makers of sweetmeats; in a third, makers of pancakes; in a fourth, silk-lace manufacturers; in a fifth, a silk weaver with his loom; in a sixth, tinners of copper vessels at their work, in a seventh whitewashers, whitewashing over and over again a wall; —in short, almost every manufacture and trade has its representatives in a separate waggon. El-Gabarty describes a procession of this kind, in which there were upwards of seventy parties of different trades and arts, each party in a separate waggon, besides buffoons, wrestlers, dancers, and others, followed by various officers, the eunuchs of the bride's family, ladies of the harîm with their attendants, then the bride in a European carriage, a troop of mamlûks clad in armour, and a Turkish band of music. It was a procession of which the like had not before been seen.

"The bride and her party, having arrived at the house, sit down to a repast. The bridegroom does not yet see her. He has already been to the bath, and at nightfall he goes in procession with a number of his friends to a mosque, to perform the night-prayers. He is accompanied by musicians and singers, or by chanters of lyric odes in praise of the Prophet, and by men bearing cressets—poles with cylindrical frames of iron at the top filled with flaming wood;—and on his return, most of his other attendants bear lighted wax candles and bunches of flowers. Returned to his house, he leaves his friends in a lower apartment, and goes up to the bride, whom he finds seated with a shawl thrown over her head, so as to conceal her face completely, and attended by one or two females. The latter he induces to retire by means of a small present. He then gives a present of money to the bride, as 'the price of uncovering the face;' and, having removed the covering (saying as he does so, 'In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful'), he beholds her, generally for the first time. On the occasion of this first visit, he is recom-

mended to perfume himself, and to sprinkle some sugar and almonds on the head of the bride and on that of each woman with her. Also when he approaches her, he should perform the prayers of two *rek'as*, and she should do the same if able: then he should take hold of the hair over her forehead, and say, 'O God, bless me in my wife, and bless my wife in me! O God, bestow upon me offspring by her, and bestow upon her offspring by me! O God, unite us, as thou hast united, happily, and separate, when thou separatest, happily.'" *

There are public festivals enough to satisfy the most dissipated, even if an Egyptian and his friends cannot muster enough weddings among themselves to furnish excuses for merrymaking all the year round. There seems to be always a festival going on in Cairo, and you have hardly recovered from the effects of one such *Môlid* when another comes to distract you even more. And the Muslim *Môlids* are not one-day festivals, like the feasts of the Christian Church—they last three, four, and even nine days at a stretch. There is hardly a week in the year that has not some excitement, some saint to be honoured, some memory to be cherished, some rite to be performed. In the opening month of the year, the sacred Moharram, the first ten days are specially holy, for in them the pious alms prescribed in the Kôran ought to be paid. The paying of alms is not, indeed, in itself an excitement; but the duty, whether fulfilled or not, is the signal for all sorts of curious customs and superstitions. People of good position carry their children about the street, and assail passers-by with demands for alms, and then sew the small coins thus obtained into the boys' caps, as charms against misfortune. Even the genii, if they are God-fearing, come to pay alms in this blessed period. A ghostly water-carrier knocks at your door one night, and asks where he shall empty his goatskin. Knowing that no human water-carrier ever comes at night, you recognise the visitor as one of the Ginn, and bid him empty his skin into your water-jar—and lo! the jar is found to be flowing over with pieces of

* *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages*, pp. 233—37.

gold. Or a mule laden with heavy saddle-bags, and ridden by naught but a dead man's head, stops at your door: you are expecting him, and without hesitation take off the head, empty the saddle-bags of their contents (which turn out to be gold coins) and replace them with straw, and then dismiss the animal with "Depart, O blessed!" Some time ago, if you bought anything in a certain part of the Salîba, opposite an ancient sarcophagus, near the Kal'at El-Kebsh, were it only a handful of dates, it instantly turned into gold: for this was a meeting-place of the pious Ginn in the holy ten days. But now the Ginn have ceased to meet in the Salîba, and the sarcophagus is in the British Museum, where no such miracle has been known to happen, either to the visitors or the officials in charge of this valuable monument.

The tenth day of Moharram is the most sacred of all, for on this day occurred the martyrdom of our lord Hoseyn on the field of Kerbela. Persia and India are the lands where this day is most highly honoured, and the Passion Play of *Hasan and Hoseyn* is performed before deeply sympathetic audiences.* But in Cairo, too, the people reverence the memory of the martyr; eat *Ashûra* or "Tenth Day" cakes in his honour, and crowd to the mosque of the Hasaneyn, where the head of the saint is buried, to do homage at the shrine, and wonder at the performances of the dervîshes, who are shouting and whirling, eating glass and fire, and wagging their heads for hours to the name of Allah. Women especially select this night to visit the mosque—

> The holy blissful martyr for to seke,
> That them hath holpen when that they were sick;—

and scandal whispers that the few men who go there enter mainly for the pleasure, such as it is, of being hustled in the dense crowd of women.

In the second month, the Egyptian caravan of pilgrims returns from Mekka, and people go out a couple of days' journey, or at least as far as the Birket El-Hagg, to meet their returning friends.

* See my *Studies in a Mosque* (1883), chap. vii.

The ceremony of welcoming the pilgrims becomes a holiday, and almost degenerates into a picnic, though the wails and shrieks of

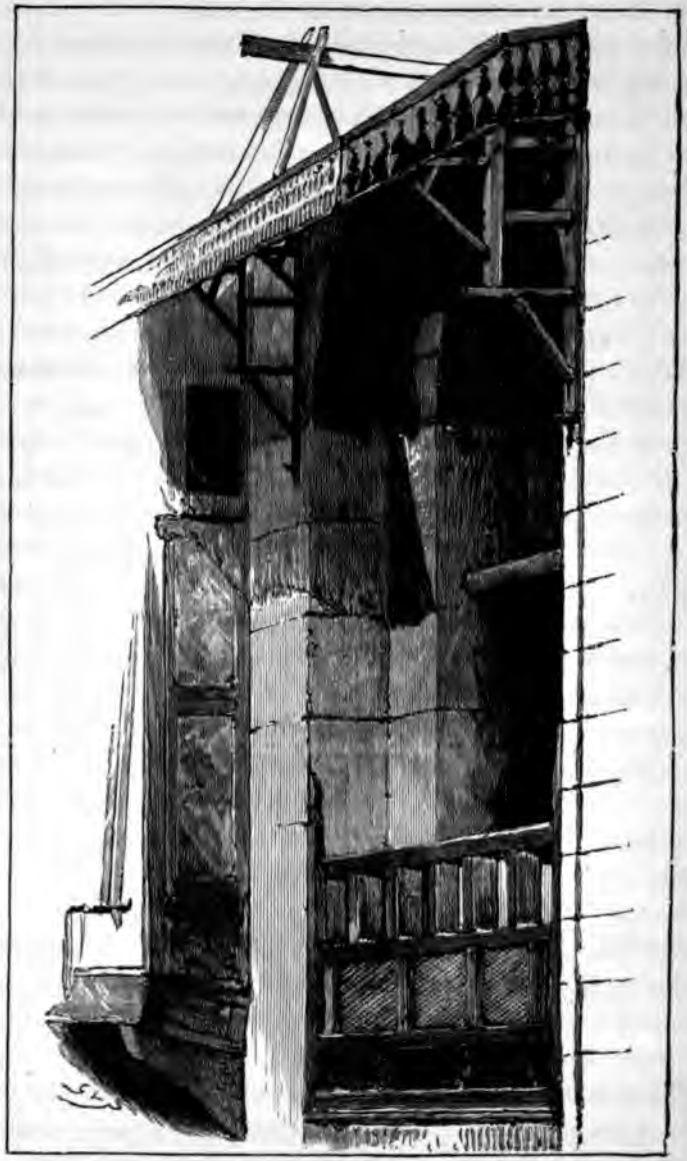
BAZAR IN BÛLÂK.

those who learn that their pilgrim kinsfolk have succumbed to the rigours of the road take off the keen edge of enjoyment. Those,

however, who do return rejoice the hearts of their friends by the relics they bring with them—sealed blue bottles, filled with water from the blessed well of Zemzem, the very well which sprang up in the desert for Hagar and Ishmael in their hour of need; dust from the Prophet's tomb at Medîna, shreds from the old covering of the Kaaba, and other venerable trophies. In return, these friends have prepared the pilgrim's house for him, painted it with red and white stripes, and adorned it with vivid green pictures of trees, and camels, and other startling objects; or, perhaps, have hung a stuffed baby-hippopotamus over the door, to show that he who dwells within is a travelled thane.

Rabî' el-Awwal, the third month of the Muslim year, has also its special event, for it is then that the festival of the Prophet's birth, the great *Môlid en-Neby*, is held. In former years—not so very long ago—this famous feast was celebrated in the waste land called the Ezbekîya, then a large lake during high Nile, but a fine open piece of ground when the river retired to its banks. Tents were pitched, wherein dervîshes recited *zikrs* interspersed with odes in praise of Mohammed, couched in mystical amatory language like that of the Song of Songs. Romancers sat on benches, and recited the famous stories of Antar and Abu-Zeyd and Delhema to an entranced audience; conjurors, buffoons, rope-dancers, exerted themselves to please the spectators; swings and whirligigs attracted old and young to simple joys; and, finally, the Sheykh of the Dôsa rode his horse gingerly over the prostrate bodies of three score fanatics. These things are somewhat changed now. The Ezbekîya has become an Italian garden, occupied by a few dusty promenaders, who go to hear the band play Waldteufel's waltzes; and the Prophet's Birthday has to be kept with less comfort elsewhere. The tents have mostly disappeared, the romances are dying out, and the barbaric Dôsa was very properly abolished by the late Khedive. The amusements, however, still go on very much as they used to fifty years ago, and the Môlid en-Neby is a famous carnival-time for the people of Cairo.

No sooner is it over than other festivals begin. To say nothing



BALCONY.

of minor commemorations, like the Môlid at Bûlâk, the great feast of the Hasaneyn treads quickly on the heels of the Prophet's Birthday, and rivals, if not surpasses, it in the magnificence of the street displays and the hilarity of the population. Since Hoseyn, in whose honour it is held (combining with his elder brother, Hasan, to form the "Hasaneyn," or "Two Hasans"), is especially the saint of the heretical Persians, and has given rise, through no merit of his own, to more schisms in the Mohammedan world than any other person,* it is strange that the Cairenes, who are almost all orthodox Sunnis, should pay such particular reverence to this feast. But the truth is, they are glad of any excuse for a holiday; and, after all, was not our lord Hoseyn the grandson of the Prophet? and is he to be given over wholly to those heretical dogs of Shî'ah? Whatever the argument, Hoseyn is deeply revered in Cairo, and his Môlid is one of the sights of the capital that most delight the European visitor. Nothing more picturesque and fairylike can be imagined than the scenes in the streets and bazars of Cairo on the great night of the Hasaneyn. The curious thing was, that, in the winter after Tell-el-Kebîr, when I stood —for riding was impossible—in the midst of the dense throng in the Musky, and struggled into the by-street that leads to the Kâdy's court and the mosque of the Hasaneyn, there was not a sign of ill-humour or fanaticism in spite of the presence of many Europeans. A more good-natured crowd was never seen. It might have been expected that at least some slight demonstration would have been made against the Europeans who wandered about the gaily illuminated streets; but English ladies walked through the bazars, English officers and tourists mingled in the throng and even reached the doors of the sacred mosque itself without the slightest molestation or even remark. Once or twice a woman might have been heard sarcastically inviting some Christian to "bless the Prophet;" but if the Christian charitably replied, "God bless and save him," she was nonplussed; and even if he did not know the proper answer, nothing came of it. The

* See my *Studies in a Mosque* (1883), chap. vii., "The Persian Miracle Play."

SCREENED MESHREDIYA.

general good-nature inspired by the festival obliterated all memories of war and heresy, and it may safely be asserted that no English mob could have been trusted to behave in so orderly and friendly a manner in the presence of a detested minority.

The scene, as I turned into one of the narrow lanes of the great Khân El-Khalîly, or Turkish bazar, which fronts the mosque of the Hasaneyn, was like a picture in the Arabian Nights. The long bazar was lighted by innumerable chandeliers and coloured lamps and candles, and covered by awnings of rich shawls and stuffs from the shops beneath; while, between the strips of awning, one could see the sombre outlines of the unlighted houses above, in striking contrast to the brilliancy and gaiety below. The shops had quite changed their character. All the wares which were usually littered about had disappeared; the trays of miscellaneous daggers and rings and spoons and what-not, were gone; and each little shop was turned into a tastefully furnished reception-room. The sides and top were hung with silks and cashmeres, velvets, brocades, and embroideries of the greatest beauty and rarity—costly stuffs, which the most inquisitive purchaser never managed to see on ordinary occasions. The whole of the sides of the bazar formed one long blaze of gold and light and colour. And within each shop the owner sat surrounded by a semicircle of friends, all dressed in their best, very clean and superbly courteous—for the Cairo tradesman is always a gentleman in aspect, even when he is cheating you most outrageously. The very man with whom you haggled hotly in the morning will now invite you politely to sit down with him and smoke; at his side is a little ivory or mother-of-pearl table, from which he takes a bottle of some sweet drink flavoured with almonds or roses, and offers it to you with finished grace. Seated in the richly-hung recess, you can see the throng pushing by; the whole population, it seems, of Cairo, in their best array and merriest temper. All at once the sound of drums and pipes is heard, and a band of dervîshes, chanting benedictions on the Prophet and Hoseyn, pass through the delighted crowd. On your left is a shop—nay, a throne-room in miniature—where

a story-teller is holding an audience spell-bound as he relates, with dramatic gestures, some favourite tale. Hard by, a holy man is revolving his head solemnly and unceasingly, as he repeats the name of God, or some potent text from the Korân. In another place, a party of dervîshes are performing a *zikr*, or a complete recital of the Korân is being chanted by swaying devotees. The whole scene is certainly unreal and fairylike. We can imagine ourselves in the land of the Ginn or in the City of Brass, but not in Cairo or in the nineteenth century.

Outside the Khân, dense masses of the people are crowding into the mosque of the Hasaneyn, where specially horrible performances take place, and where the tour of the shrine of Hoseyn must be made. Near by, a string of men are entering a booth; we follow, and find tumblers at work, and a performing pony, and a clown who always imitates the feats of the gymnasts, always fails grotesquely, and invariably provokes roars of laughter. In another booth Kara-Guz is carrying on his intrigues: this Egyptian Punch is better manipulated than our own, whom he nearly resembles; but he is not so choice in his language or behaviour, and we are glad before long to leave a place where the jokes are rather broad, and certain saltatory insects unusually active. People of the lower class, however, care nothing for these drawbacks; they laugh till their sides ache at Kara-Guz's sallies, and whatever they see, wherever they go, whomever they meet, whatsoever their cares and their poverty, on this blessed night of the Hasaneyn they are perfectly happy. An Egyptian crowd is very easily amused: the simplest sights and oldest jests delight it; and it is enough to make a fastidious European regret his niceness to see how these simple folk enjoy themselves upon so small an incentive.

Certainly there are plenty of such incentives, if they are not very varied or very exciting. The Hasaneyn festival is followed by the Môlids of many other holy personages—whether they are female saints, like our Lady Zeyneb, or learned divines, like the famous Imâm Esh-Shâfi'y—into the boat on the leaden dome of whose beautiful thirteenth-century mosque a quantity of grain

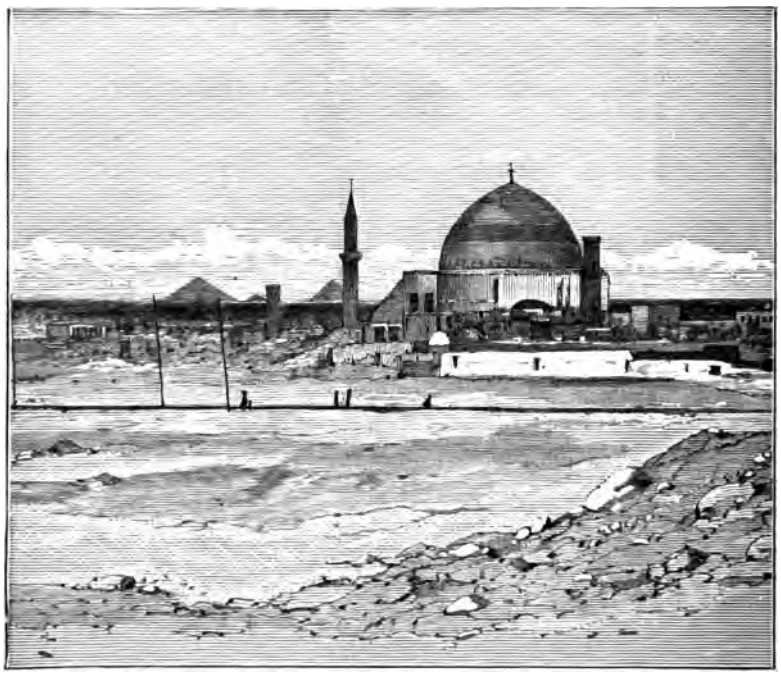
used to be poured every month of Sha'bân. Then there is the Feast of the Miraculous Ascent—to wit, the visit to Paradise, which Mohammed dreamed he made upon the back of the fabulous beast Borâk, and which his disciples manufactured into a real bodily ascent into heaven. There is the great fast of Ramadân; and after the fast comes the feast, the 'Id Es-Saghîr, when everyone rejoices that the penance is over and done, and shouts with the Poet-Khalif El-Mo'tezz—

> Welcome! and heartily, lute and reed,
> And a quaffing of wine from the hands of the slim!
> The Fast is over at last, and the 'Id
> Is announced by the young moon's sickle rim;
> The Pleiades fly from her greedy gape,
> Which yawns like a glutton's on clustering grape.

Every one puts on his very best clothes—quite new, if he can—and prepares to enjoy himself after his privations. Friends kiss each other in the street; all the world pours out thankful prayers at the mosque; servants receive bakhshîsh from masters, past and present; pancakes and salt fish are devoured in every house; whole families pay visits to the tombs of their relations, break green palm branches over them, and spread sweet basil around; while swings and whirligigs at the approaches to the cemetery show that even grave-visiting may be made an exhilarating diversion.

Presently the time arrives for the procession of the Kiswa—the Holy Carpet, which is carried in solemn pomp, and in the presence of all the court and the army, from the citadel to the Hasaneyn, where its sewing is finished, and it is made ready to be taken with the pilgrims and hung over the sacred Kaaba. And soon after, a second procession follows—the passing of the Mahmal, which, like the Ark of the Covenant, is carried before the pilgrim caravan to Mekka and back again. It is a sort of howdah—a square frame of wood, with a pyramidal top, covered with brocade and inscriptions worked in gold, with the Tughrâ, or Sultan's cipher, at the top, and a view of the Kaaba on the front. It contains nothing; but two copies of the Korân are attached to

it outside. Its origin is traced to the beautiful Queen Shejer-ed-durr ("Tree of Pearls" was her romantic name, being interpreted), wife of the founder of the dynasty of Turkish Mamlûks, who performed the pilgrimage to Mekka in a litter of this shape in the year 1272. Ever afterwards a litter was sent with the Egyptian caravan of pilgrims as an emblem of royalty. But there is no



MOSQUE OF ESH-SHÂFI'Y, NEAR OLD CAIRO; PYRAMIDS IN BACKGROUND.

doubt that the Mahmal has an older origin than this: it is, perhaps, a survival of the Sacred Barques of the ancient Egyptian temples, or represents the curious standards of some of the Arab tribes.

Space fails us to speak of the 'Id El-Kebîr, in the last month of the year; or of the ceremony of "Smelling the Breeze," when the period of hot winds, called Khamâsîn, comes

on; or of the "Night of the Drop," when a miraculous drop falls into the Nile and makes it begin to rise, and when people put lumps of dough on their house-tops, and anxiously inspect them in the morning—for a cracked lump of dough means death in the course of the year; but something has already been said of the joyous feast which accompanies the cutting of the canal, when the Nile is at its height. These and many other festivals furnish occasion for merrymaking and enjoyment; and it is the Cairene's own fault if he does not amuse himself. The curious feature about these many feasts is that they are not at all in accord with the austere spirit of the Mohammedan religion. Indeed, many of them are not Mohammedan in origin, but are clearly descended from ancient Egyptian rites and customs. Islâm itself, as taught by the Prophet, lends no countenance to such superstitions; but human nature triumphs over creeds, and people must amuse themselves sometimes, in spite of their religion; and thus, finally, what was no part of the religion, and, indeed, was inconsistent with it, became to the Egyptians the most cherished and essential portion.

The amusements of the Egyptians, however, whether religious or secular, are quiet amusements. He enjoys looking at dancers, but he does not dance himself; he listens to music, but to sing or play himself would demand too much exertion; he watches the gymnast, but tries no feats of strength in his own person; he wanders through illuminated streets and listens to zikrs and romances, but he proceeds in as leisurely a manner as possible. If he plays games they are sedentary games—chess, draughts, backgammon, cards, mankala. There was a time when he hunted and hawked, but now he does not understand sport or the chase. Throwing the *jerîd* is out of fashion; and, in short, anything athletic or virile is foreign to the indolent sedate character of the Egyptian. It is true that well-intentioned people are trying to impart a taste for cricket and football to the youth of Cairo; but it may be doubted whether an Egyptian eleven will ever form a feature in our county "fixtures." The Cairene does not cultivate

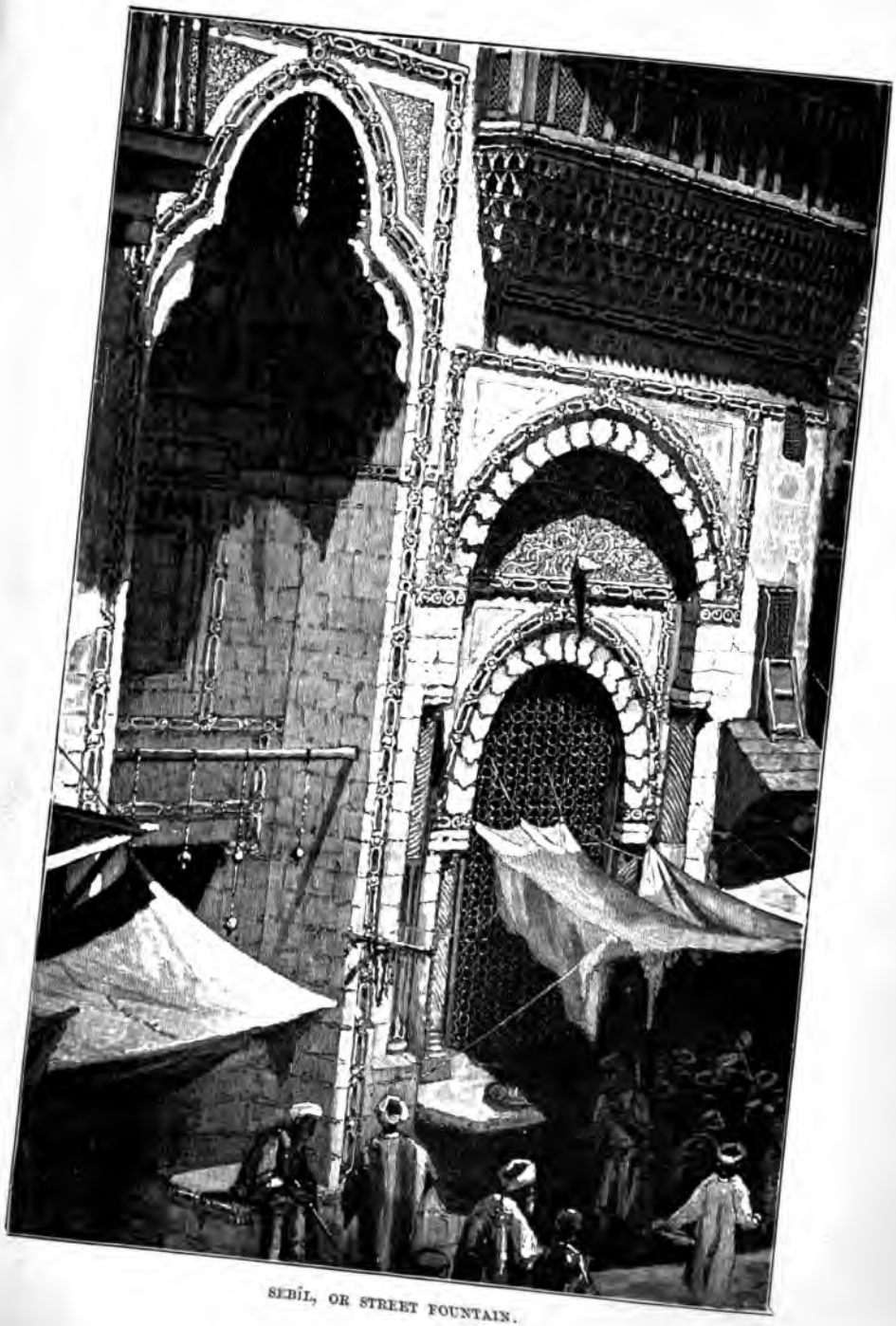
physical exertion—he detests it. If he is to enjoy himself, it must be in a tranquil manner. In a hot climate, one is not over-anxious to move,—

> But, propt on beds of asphodel and moly,
> How sweet (while warm air lulls us, blowing lowly),
> With half-dropt eyelid still
> Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
> To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
> His waters from the purple hills.

CHAPTER VII

EDUCATION AND RELIGION

THE time-honoured educational system of Egypt is certainly not open to the charge of being over elaborate. Although the Prophet Mohammed entertained a high opinion of the merits of wisdom, and said, "Whoso pursueth the road of knowledge, God will direct him to the road of Paradise; and verily the angels spread out their arms to welcome the searcher after wisdom, and all things in Heaven and Earth ask grace for him: for the pre-eminence of a learned man over a mere worshipper is as the full moon above the stars;" and although the Prophet's followers are noted for their veneration for wise men, it cannot be said that they often attain wisdom themselves. Many of them, indeed, show a praiseworthy zeal in the pursuit of the crabbed scholastic theology and hermeneutics of the Azhar University, but outside religious lore their minds are ill-stored with learning or even common information. They are nimble-witted enough when the various interpretations of a problematical passage in the Korân is under discussion, but of science, general literature, foreign languages, philosophy proper, and history, they are for the most part absolutely ignorant. The education of the intellect is, indeed, the last thing a parent considers in bringing up his child. To teach him the articles of faith and train him in polite behaviour are the first objects of the Egyptian father. In the latter respect there is nothing to find fault with. The Egyptian child is outwardly a thorough gentleman. His long seclusion in the harîm, where he becomes accus-



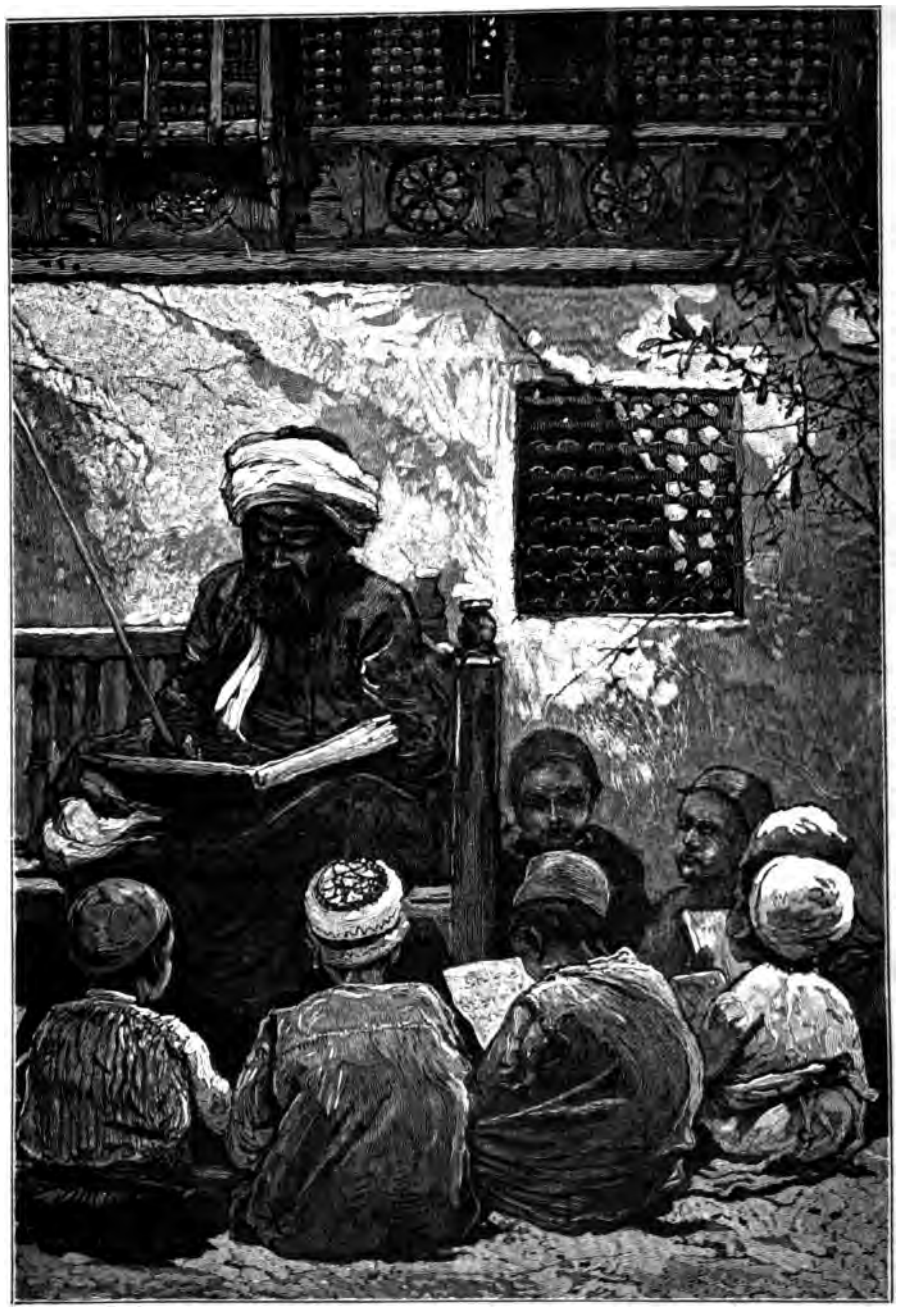
SEBÍL, OR STREET FOUNTAIN.

tomed to behave himself courteously among women, gives him a singular grace and self-possession. The awe in which the head of the house is held by the women breeds a fine sense of respect in the son. "God's pleasure is in a father's pleasure," said Mohammed the Prophet, and "God's displeasure is in a father's displeasure." On this dictum the children of the East model their domestic behaviour. The little son stands respectfully in the father's presence, kisses his hand, and will on no account sit down unless invited to do so by his parent. A grown-up son will not smoke or lounge in his father's sight, and I have seen sons of thirty or forty attentively waiting on their father while he dines, and absolutely refusing to eat anything until he has finished. The careful inculcation of respect to parents and elders produces the happiest results in the outward bearing of Mohammedans. Nothing more greatly surprises the European traveller than the polite and gentlemanlike manners of Egyptians of all classes. They always do the right thing in the most courteous, graceful, and self-possessed manner, and intentional rudeness to an older man or a superior in rank is almost unknown. An undutiful child is the rarest of beings. But beyond manners and formulas of religion, and perhaps a trade, the father teaches the son nothing—for the good reason that he seldom knows anything himself. What the child is taught, by father and schoolmaster, is little more than how to say his prayers, how to perform the ablutions preparatory to prayer, to recite the Korân, and to read. The very first thing that happens to the luckless infant is a man shouting in his ear the *adân*, or call to prayer: "God is most great! God is most great! God is most great! God is most great! I testify that there is no God but God! I testify that there is no God but God! I testify that Mohammed is God's apostle! I testify that Mohammed is God's apostle! Come to prayer! Come to prayer! Come to security! Come to security! God is most great! God is most great! There is no God but God!" As if this performance were not sufficient to harden the child against the fear of noise, a woman

clashes a brass mortar and pestle close to his ear, and he is then put into a sieve and thoroughly shaken up.

The religious education, thus begun, is continued as soon as the child begins to speak by his father's teaching him to say the *kelima*, or credo: "There is no God but God; Mohammed is the apostle of God." To which he adds, "Wherefore exalted be God, the King, the Truth! There is no God but He, the Lord of the glorious Throne;" and proceeds to recite certain favourite verses of the Korân. When the boy is five or six years old he is sent to the public school. An institution of this kind, due to the munificence of some pious founder, is attached to almost every mosque and drinking fountain in Cairo and the country towns, and in our walks we come across many groups of vociferous schoolboys, shouting the Korân as they sway to and fro in front of the reverend sheykh, their master. The school consists of a single room, where the pupils, who are not too numerous to form one class, squat in rows before the schoolmaster, and are duly provided, for a very trifling payment, with what, until recently, passed for a polite education in Egypt. This consists, first, in learning the alphabet, which the master writes out in bold characters on a small white board, which the pupil holds in his hands. Next, reading is taught by easy stages, but very often this accomplishment is never properly acquired, and the pupil passes on to learning the Korân, or part of it, by heart. To be able to recite certain portions of the Korân is essential to the due performance of the rites of religion; whereas most people can get on in Egypt very well without being very proficient in reading. Hence the learning of the Korân is the chief business of the school, and reading is directed mainly to that end. The pupil is given a chapter of the sacred book, opened out on a little desk made of palm-sticks, and proceeds to commit it to memory by chanting it aloud in a sing-song fashion, swinging the body to and fro to the rhythm of the verses. It is not difficult to ascertain when a school is at work: the babel of confused noise which proceeds from the simultaneous chanting of different portions of the Korân by the various scholars is audible from afar.

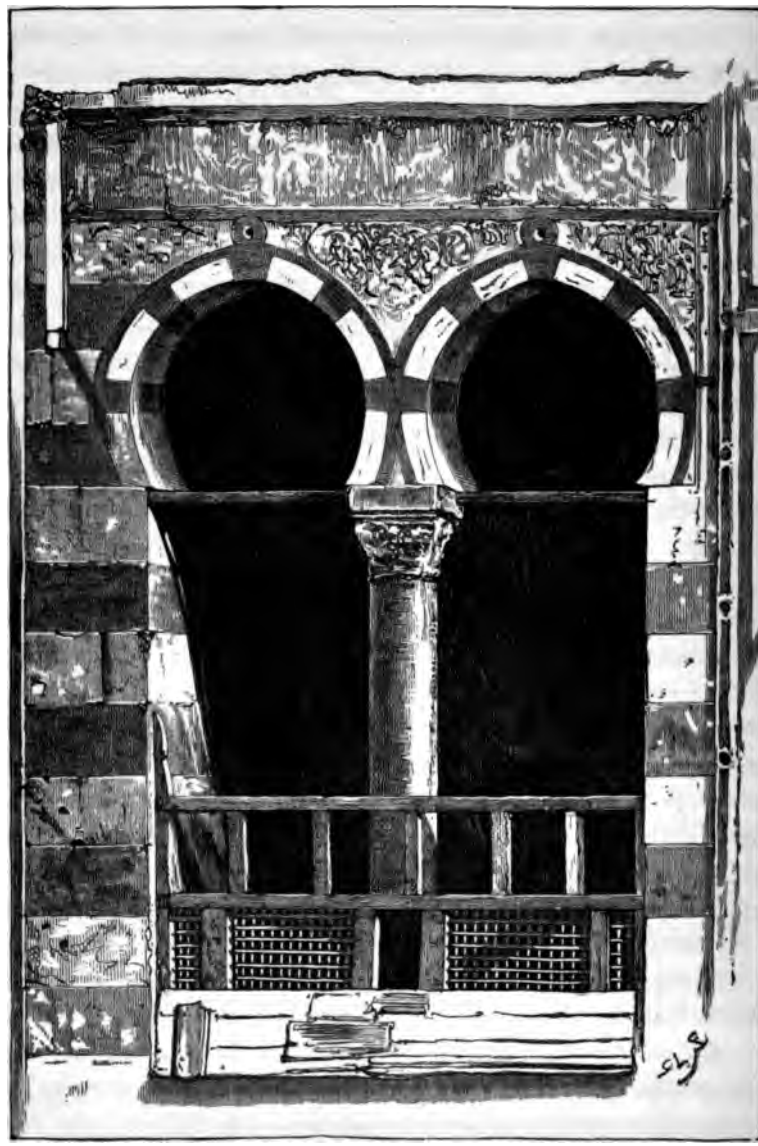
This is all that the boy generally learns at school. Indeed, the schoolmaster could not teach him much more. The worthy man knows his Korân, and can instil it, with the help of a stout cane, into his pupils' skulls; but he is thoroughly illiterate, and sometimes cannot even read, and has to get a pupil-teacher to write the alphabets and copies, on the pretence of having weak eyes. Writing is not always taught at a school, and the lower classes do not feel any urgent necessity for this accomplishment. Public writers are always to be found if a letter has to be indited on rare occasions. If the pupil wishes to attain the summit of Egyptian learning he must attend the classes of the collegiate mosque called the Azhar. In theory this is an admirable institution. It is a mosque in which the great open court is surrounded by covered porticoes, each of which is divided into various compartments called *riwâks*, reserved for the separate use of students of different nations. One partition, for instance, is appropriated to students from Morocco, another to Mekkans, a third to Syrians, a fourth to Turks, and so on. Eager young men travel hither from the furthest quarters of the Mohammedan world—from West Africa, from India, from the Malay Peninsula—to be instructed in the refinements of theology, grammar, prosody, rhetoric, Korân exegesis, the sacred Traditions, jurisprudence, and whatsoever else appertains to the Mohammedan scholastic system. Learned professors expound these sciences, according to the methods of the four orthodox sects of Islâm, to enthusiastic knots of students, who sit on the ground before them in a semicircle, just like the little scholars in the elementary school, and sway to and fro as they commit to memory some important statement or some cardinal example of prosody, exactly as before they swayed when they chanted the Korân to their irascible old schoolmaster. The fees for the schoolmaster were insignificant, but the training at the Azhar is purely gratuitous. The most learned men in Egypt, and indeed in all the countries round about, come hither to teach the results of their study without reward. The students receive daily allowances of food, provided by the endowments of the *riwâk* to



AT SCHOOL.

which they are attached—the bequests of pious folk who wished to pave their own road to Paradise; and being very poor, these earnest followers on the path of wisdom eke out a scanty livelihood by taking private pupils and copying manuscripts. By the same methods, and by reciting the Korân at festivals, the professors who devote their lives to teaching at the Azhar manage to keep themselves alive. After some years of teaching they often become kâdis, muftis, imâms, or schoolmasters; but some remain all their lives at the Azhar, and attain the coveted honour of being enrolled among the "Ulamâ," or "wise men," of the university, a powerful class from which the legal and official ranks are largely recruited.

The Azhar is indeed the university of Islâm. Its influence is felt wherever the Mohammedan religion is known, and its disciples are collected from all parts of the Muslim world. In it we see something of the ancient zeal and pure search after wisdom which distinguished the universities of Europe in the great twelfth century, when they produced scholars, not country gentlemen, and prepared men for a laborious life of study, not for Lord's and Mortlake. Not that country gentlemen and Blues are anything but the pride of English manhood; but from the purely scholarly point of view the constitution of the Azhar University is ideally perfect. The poorest youth who comes to it will be immediately welcomed, and will be taught all that the professors know—which is synonymous with all Muslim learning. He will receive the highest education that a Muslim can receive, by Muslim methods, without being called upon to pay a single piastre. When we stand in the midst of the crowds of students, of whom ten thousand throng the Azhar every year, we cannot but feel amazed at the contrast between the Mohammedan university and our own colleges. Instead of college dues, university dues, battels, servants' fees, lecturers' fees, professors' fees, examination fees, degree fees, the undergraduates of the Azhar are partly supplied with food, are taught for nothing, and receive a license on the strength of their proficiency as teachers and students. Instead of wine-parties and "bump suppers," they meet together over a crust of bread and a



WINDOW OF SCHOOL OF KÂÏT BEY.

water bottle to debate questions of grammar and Korânic criticism; instead of pinching their parents to meet their tailors' bills and the subscription to the boat club, cricket club, and all the other clubs, the Azhar undergraduates earn their frugal living themselves. It is the unhappy fact that the subjects taught in the Azhar are perhaps even less profitable in after life than the art of turning hexameters and sapphics; but this does not detract from the beauty of the system.' It cannot be denied that the Azhar training is terribly mistaken and obsolete. The grammar and rhetoric and casuistry belong to the age of the Schoolmen, and are of little practical use to the learners, except perhaps as mental discipline. Moreover, the tendency of these studies is inevitably towards fanaticism. The Ulamâ and professors of the Azhar are as a rule the most bigoted of their race, and at times it would be almost impossible for a Christian to set foot within the building without danger of insult and even personal injury.

It has been shown that the education of the Egyptians is almost wholly religious. Whatever teaching there is of science, history, languages, or anything unconnected with the Korân, is the work of Europeans, or the few schools founded on European models. These were originally the creation of the most sagacious of modern Egyptian rulers, Mohammed 'Aly, who was determined to place the country he had adopted on an educational level with Europe. Under his successors they languished and died, and their hasty and inconsiderate revival under Isma'îl was again undone by the troubles which clouded the last years of his reign. It is only since the advent of English authority that the European system has been seriously taken in hand and developed. The Ministry of Public Instruction does not control the local village schools, but it has forty-seven schools and colleges under its direction, twenty-nine of which are primary schools, eight intermediary, one a girls' school, three training colleges for teachers of Arabic, English, and French, an Agricultural College, and Colleges of Engineering, Medicine, and Law. The budget of the department amounts to

something over £100,000 a year, but it ought to be double that sum. It is too early yet to estimate accurately the progress which has been made in these schools, which are naturally difficult to graft upon the traditional educational system of Islam. A beginning has been made, and we must wait before we can fairly weigh the results.

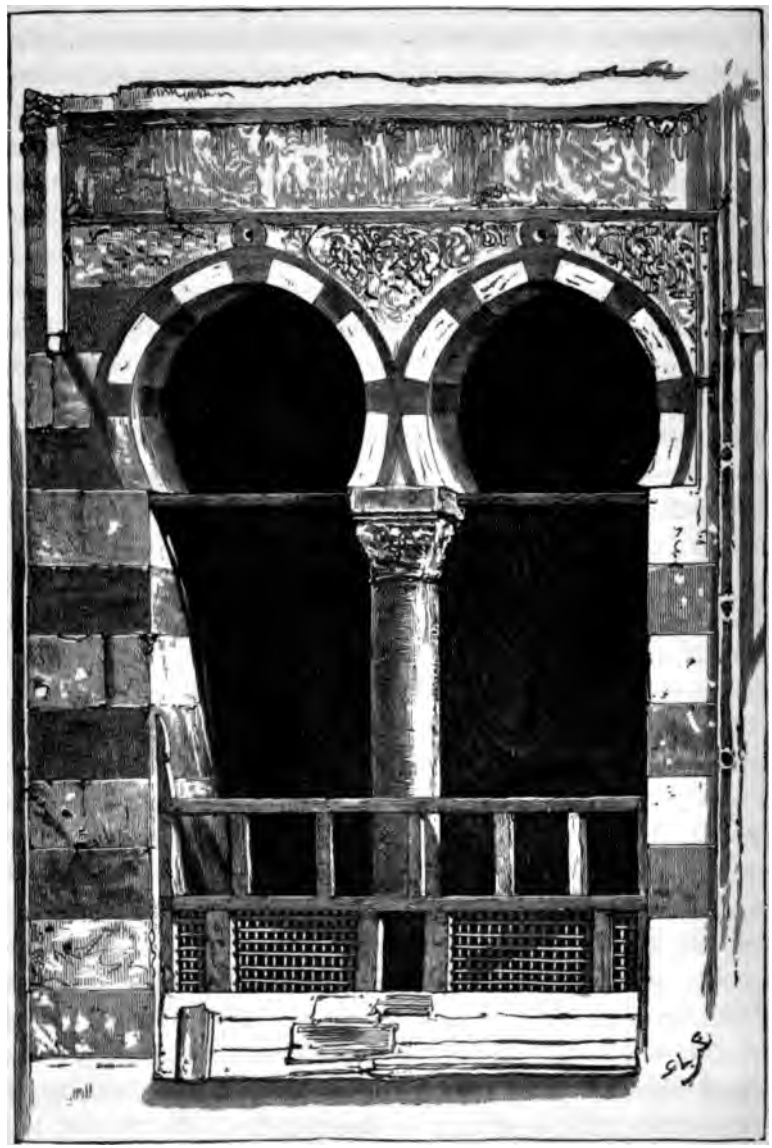
There are certain signs that improved education is becoming popular in Egypt. The village schools, the lowest in the scale, have largely increased in number: between 1875 and 1887, 2,407 new schools were opened, and nearly 3,000 more teachers employed, making an increase of about fifty per cent. on the numbers of 1875. In the province of Asyût alone the schools have risen in twelve years from 283 to 689, and at Kinê from 113 to 424; and Sir Evelyn Baring, in a tour in Upper Egypt in 1889, found that the most frequent request made to him in out-of-the-way villages was for a school. In the better, or Government, schools a good test of popularity is provided by the growth of the income from parents' fees. In 1881 only thirty per cent. of the school attendance consisted of paying pupils, and the fees amounted to only £2,323. In 1890, 62 per cent. of the 7,307 pupils paid, and the receipts were £19,038. In the following year the proportion had risen to 71 per cent. on an attendance of 7,591. In these Government schools 2,091 pupils are learning English, and 2,836 French, in addition to Arabic. It was of course little short of revolutionary to propose to teach science and history in any language but that of the Korân; but the reform has been successfully introduced, and English and American visitors have recently been amazed at the general familiarity of the Cairo "board-school boy" with colloquial English. "It is not too much to say that if the reorganisation of the course of study which has recently been effected is allowed a fair trial, the whole character of public education in Egypt will be gradually transformed, and it may be hoped that a body of well-educated Egyptians will eventually be trained who will be capable of administering the country efficiently with little or no European

assistance."* If this is ever accomplished, it will be largely due to the energy and judgment of Yakub Artin Pasha, the present accomplished head of the Educational Department.

The ordinary Egyptian learns, as we have seen, little beyond his Korân and prayers, and the other duties of his religion. What that religion is, it now becomes needful to explain. It is called Islâm, or "resignation," "self-surrender," and was first promulgated by Mohammed in the beginning of the seventh century of our era. So rapid was its spread, that in less than a century it was acknowledged from the Atlantic to the Caspian. It is a development of the Jewish religion, modified to suit the character of the Arabs, and mixed with superstitions and rites belonging to pagan Arabia. The source of our knowledge of this religion must ever be the Korân—the strange and complex record of Mohammed's impassioned rhapsodies, studied harangues, legal decisions, ordinances of ritual, and other heterogeneous matters.† It is a mistake, however, to imagine that the Korân contains a formulated dogmatic system or a code of laws: the proportion of definite precepts and ordinances in it is curiously small, and the major part of the book is composed of passionate appeals to the people to leave their idols and turn to the living God; of vivid pictures of the horrible end of those who refuse to believe, and the glorious future of the faithful in God's paradise; of analogies drawn from the works of nature, from the stars and the sun, the seasons and the resurrection of the earth in spring, from the thunder and the deep sea—all used with the sole object of bringing home to the minds and imaginations of his hearers the majesty and awfulness of the One God whom to serve and obey was the highest happiness of man, and whose worship it was Mohammed's paramount and all-absorbing mission to preach and enforce by prayers

* Sir E. Baring's *Report, Egypt*, No. 3, 1891. See also Mr. F. S. Clarke's Memorandum No. 6, 1888; and No. 3, 1892; and Yakub Artin Pasha's interesting work *L'Instruction Publique en Egypt* (Paris, 1889). Some interesting statistics from last year's work are given in chapter xvi. of Mr. Charles Cooper's *Seeking the Sun* (Edinburgh, 1892).

† See my *Speeches and Table-Talk of the Prophet Mohammed.* (1882.)



WINDOW OF SCHOOL OF KÂÏT BEY.

and threats, entreaties, arguments, and denunciations. This is Islâm—no Eastern calls it Mohammedanism; it is a form of pure theism, simple, austere, exacting; lofty in its conception of the relation of man to God, and noble in its doctrine of the duty of man to man. Over-rigid and formal it may be in practice; it puts a prophet and a book between man and his Maker; it lacks the loving-kindness of Christianity; but in its high, stern monotheism it is supremely grand.

Men trained in European ideas of religion have always found a difficulty in understanding the fascination which the Muslim faith has for so many minds in the East. "There is no god but God, and Mohammed is his prophet." There is nothing in this, they say, to move the heart. Yet this creed has stirred an enthusiasm that has never been surpassed. Islâm has had its martyrs, its self-tormentors, its recluses, who have renounced all that life offered and have accepted death with a smile for the sake of the faith that was in them. It is idle to say that the eternity of happiness will explain this. The truest martyrs of Islâm as of Christianity did not die to gain paradise. But if they had so died the belief in the promises of the creed must have followed the hearty acceptance of the religion. Islâm must have possessed a power of seizing men's belief before it could have inspired them with such a love of its paradise. Mohammed's conception of God has, I think, been misunderstood, and its effects upon the people consequently underestimated. The God of Islâm is commonly represented as a pitiless tyrant, who plays with humanity as on a chess-board, and works out his game without regard to the sacrifice of the pieces; and there is a certain truth in the figure. There is more in Islâm of the potter who shapes the clay than of the father pitying his children. Mohammed conceived of God as the Semitic mind has always preferred to think of him; his God is the Almighty, the All-knowing, the All-just. Irresistible power is the first attribute ascribed to the Lord of the Worlds, the Author of the Heavens and the Earth, who hath created Life and Death, in whose hands is Dominion, who maketh the Dawn to appear

THE HOUR OF PRAYER IN A MOSQUE.

and causeth the Night to cover the Day, the Great All-powerful Lord of the glorious Throne; the Thunder proclaimeth his perfection, the whole earth is his handful, and the Heavens shall be folded together in his right hand. And to the power is joined the knowledge that directs it to right ends. God is the Wise, the Just, the True, the Swift in reckoning, who knoweth every ant's weight of good and of ill that each man hath done, and who suffereth not the reward of the faithful to perish. "God! There is no God but he, the living, the steadfast! Slumber seizeth him not, nor sleep. Whatsoever is in the Heavens, and whatsoever is in the Earth, is his. Who is there that shall plead with him, save by his leave? He knoweth what was before and what shall come after, and they compass not aught of his knowledge but what he willeth. His Throne overspreadeth the Heavens and the Earth, and the keeping of both is no burden to him; and he is the High, the Great."*

But with this power there is also the gentleness that belongs only to great strength. God is the Guardian over his servants, the Shelterer of the orphan, the Guider of the erring, the Deliverer from every affliction; in his hand is Good, and he is the Generous Lord, the Gracious, the Hearer, the Near-at-hand. Each chapter of the Korân begins with the words, "In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful," and Mohammed was never tired of telling the people how God was Very-forgiving, that his love for man was more tender than the mother-bird for her young.

The doctrine of one Supreme God, to whose will it is the duty of every man to surrender himself, is the kernel of Islâm, the truth for which Mohammed lived and suffered and triumphed. But it was no new teaching, as he himself was constantly saying. His was only the last of revelations. Many prophets—Abraham, Moses, and Christ—had taught the same faith before; but people had hearkened little to their words. So Mohammed was sent, not differing from them, a simple messenger, yet the last and greatest of them, the "seal of prophecy," the "most excellent of the

* The "Throne-Verse": Korân ii. 256.

creation of God." This is the second dogma of Islâm: "Mohammed is the apostle of God." It is well worthy of notice that it is not said "Mohammed is the only apostle of God." Islâm is more tolerant in this matter than other religions. Its prophet is not the sole commissioner of the Most High, nor is his teaching the only true teaching the world has ever received. Many other messengers had been sent by God to guide men to the right, and these taught the same religion that was in the mouth of the preacher of Islâm. Hence Muslims reverence Moses and Christ only next to Mohammed. All they claim for their founder is that he was the last and best of the messengers of the one God.* The Prophet said: "Whosoever shall bear witness that there is one God: and that Mohammed is his servant and messenger; and that Jesus Christ is his servant and messenger, and that he is the son of the handmaid of God, and that he is the word of God, the word which was sent to Mary, and a spirit from God; and shall bear witness that there is truth in Heaven and Hell, will enter into paradise whatever sins he may be charged with."†

Besides the doctrine of one God, and of Mohammed's prophetic mission, the Muslim must believe in angels and evil spirits, in paradise and hell, in the resurrection and the judgment. The practical duties of Islâm are peculiarly onerous: they consist chiefly in prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and making the pilgrimage to Mekka. The prayers of Muslims are elaborate performances; they not only take time, but they require the worshipper first to perform certain ablutions of the face, mouth, neck, arms, and feet, which are essential to the due observance of prayer. Five times a day the *adân* or call to prayer sounds from the minarets of the mosques; and so many times should the worshipper wash himself according to minutely ordained rules, and say certain no less minutely ordained formulas of prayer. The rules are not to be found in the Korân, indeed, but Mohammedans profess to find the needful instructions in the personal example of their prophet, duly noted and recorded by his disciples. The prayers may be

* See my *Studies in a Mosque* (1883), pp. 88—99. † *Mishkât El-Masâbih*, i., p. 11.

said anywhere, and it is quite usual to see a shopman with whom you are bargaining, when the call to prayer sounds, spread out his carpet with the point of the pattern set towards Mekka, and go through the prescribed rites. On the other hand, many say their prayers very irregularly, or omit them altogether. The best of prayers, however, are those said in the mosque, which is of course primarily a place of prayer, though it generally partakes of the character of a school, a refuge, and a quiet, cool spot for repose in the heat of the day: it is at least never a place for exhibiting dresses, for staring at neighbours, or for extorting money. The mosque is free to all, there are no pew-rents, no Easter offerings, no collections. Nor is a mosque a place of priestly processions, such as those which paced the solemn halls of Karnak. The Mohammedan religion has no priests and no processions. Prayers are the sole rites observed in the mosques except on Fridays, when a short sermon is added to the service. It is a singular sight to watch the groups of people at prayer, when the call from the minaret has summoned them at the appointed time from their various avocations.

Mohammedan prayers are certainly full of repetitions, and governed by minute laws of ritual, the exact performance of which reflects no little credit on the memory of the worshipper.* They are performed daily at the five periods, and are said to be of so many *rek'as*, or bowings. The worshipper, standing with his face towards Mekka and his feet not quite close together, announces inaudibly that he purposes to recite the prayers of so many rek'as, the morning prayers, or whatever they may be, and then raising his open hands on each side of his face, and touching the lobes of his ears with the ends of his thumbs, he says the *tekbir*: "God is most Great!" (*Alláhu Akbar.*) He then recites the prayers thus:—Still standing, and placing his hands before him, a little below his girdle, the left within the right, he recites (with his eyes directed towards the spot where his head will touch the ground in prostration) the Fátiha, or opening chapter of the

* The following description of a Muslim's prayer is abridged from Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians.*

PERFORMING A REK'A OF PRAYER.

Korân, and after it three or more other verses, or one of the short chapters. He then says, "God is most Great!" bowing the while and placing his hands upon his knees, with his fingers a little apart. In this posture he says, "I extol the perfection of my Lord, the Great!" (three times), adding, "May God hear him who praiseth Him. Our Lord, praise be unto Thee!" Then, standing upright, he repeats, "God is most Great!" He next drops upon his knees, and saying again, "God is most Great!" places his hands upon the ground, a little before his knees, and lays his nose and forehead to the ground, saying the while, "I extol the perfection of my Lord, the Most High!" (three times). Then, still kneeling, he raises his head and body, sinks backwards upon his heels, and places his hands upon his thighs, to the words, "God is most Great!" and this he repeats as he again bends his head to the ground, saying the same words as before. Thus are completed the prayers of one rek'a. In all the changes of posture, the toes of the right foot must not be moved from the spot where they were first placed, and the left foot should be moved as little as possible. Then he rises up and goes through a second rek'a exactly like the first, only he should vary the chapter or portion of the Korân after the Fâtiha. After every *second* rek'a he does not immediately raise his knees from the ground, but bends his left foot under him, and sits upon it, with his hands on his thighs and his fingers a little apart. In this posture he says, "Praises are to God, and prayers, and good works. Peace be to thee, O Prophet, and the mercy of God and his blesssings. Peace be on us and on all the righteous worshippers of God." Then raising the first finger of the right hand (but not the hand itself), he adds, "I testify that there is no deity but God, and I testify that Mohammed is his servant and his Apostle." After completing the last rek'a, the worshipper, looking to his right and then to his left, says, "Peace be on you, and the mercy of God!" These salutations are considered by some as addressed only to the guardian angels who watch over the believer and note all his actions, but others say that they are addressed to both angels and men.

There are supererogatory acts of prayers, like repeating the ninety-nine "Most Beautiful Names" of God, which the believer will occasionally perform; but the prayers above described are the ordinary formulas. In spite of their complicated ritual they scarcely occupy five minutes; and, notwithstanding their apparent lifelessness, they do not give the impression of "vain repetitions," so devout and absorbed is the bearing of the worshippers, so reverent their air. On Friday—the Mohammedan Sabbath—special public prayers are conducted by an Imâm, or precentor, called the Khatîb, who is in no sense a priest, or a member of any special class or caste, but merely a schoolmaster or shopman of the neighbourhood, appointed by the mosque warden to read the prayers and preach the sermon, for a trifling salary. The same prayers are said as on week-days, but chapters of the Korân are recited by a reader, and the Khatîb, from the top step of the pulpit, a wooden sword in his hand, delivers first a short sermon and then recites a form of benediction upon various holy personages of Islâm, down to the reigning Sultan of Turkey, and finishes with these words, "Verily God commands justice, and the doing of good and giving his rights to one's kindred, and forbids wickedness and iniquity and oppression: He warns you that ye may consider. Remember God: he will remember you. And thank him: he will multiply blessings upon you. Praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds!" After a few prayers the congregation disperses.

The next important obligation of the Muslim after prayer is fasting. The Mohammedans do not observe special days of fasting in the week, or once in a way, but keep a whole month of Fast. This month is called *Ramadân*, and during it, *from sunrise to sunset*, no Muslim in sound health must touch food or drink, or smoke, or smell a scent, or even swallow his own saliva intentionally, on pain of beginning the fast over again. When the shifting of the lunar year brings Ramadân to summer, the fast becomes terribly onerous, for a summer day lasts sixteen hours, and the unhappy fasters are half dead when at last night falls upon their hunger. The poor have to work all day as usual, but the rich sleep

and lounge and do nothing beyond becoming exceedingly cross and morose, till kindly night brings with it the permission to enjoy a tremendous supper. During Ramadân the night is turned into day. All the shops are open and lighted, and the exhausted populace takes refuge in wild carousals, in listening to reciters and other performers, and generally trying to restore its spirits before another dreaded day of fasting begins. A favourite form of entertainment during Ramadân is the recital of a *zikr* by a group of dervîshes. They sit, to the number of thirty perhaps, in a ring, and chant first in slow measure, "There is no god but God," to the following air :—

bowing the head and body twice in each repetition of the phrase. This lasts about a quarter of an hour, and then they quicken the time. Meanwhile professional singers chant odes of an erotic religious character. The zikkîrs vary their chant, and the singing grows faster and faster ; they stand up and wag their heads from side to side in their excitement, and sometimes fall down in an epileptic fit. The rolling of heads and jumping and fits go on for a couple of hours till this religious exercise is over, when the exhausted performers and spectators disperse, rather the worse for their exertions.* The whole affair is a little distressing to sober people ; but after all it is much the same thing as we see in England when the Salvation Army performs a *zikr* on the beach at Eastbourne. In Cairo, however, it is taken seriously.

* *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages*. p. 73.

Another form of entertainment highly enjoyed by Mohammedans is a *khatma*, or recital of the entire Korân. This portentous performance is carried out by a group of reciters, who take turns at the monotonous chanting which so curiously delights the Eastern mind. Happy but pious bridegrooms are wont to hire a party to recite a *khatma* for the delectation of the wedding-guests; and on all great festivals there is no more popular form of entertainment among the respectable classes. When the people of Cairo want to indulge in serious dissipation they go to visit the graves of their defunct relations, and to cheer them in their sombre revelry, the houses reserved for the use of mourners are often filled with the solemn chanting of the Korân in honour of the dead. In his amusements, as in everything else, the Egyptian is, before all things, a religious man. Intercourse with Franks doubtless weakens this characteristic in individuals, and in the special classes with whom Europeans chiefly come in contact; but the mass of the people, unsophisticated as of old, enjoy themselves after the staid Muslim fashion, by listening to the words of the great Muslim book. It must not be forgotten that the Korân is peculiarly well adapted for the purposes of recital. If not quite poetry, it is more than prose, for the verses rhyme in a musical fashion and the sentences generally fall in a rhythmical cadence. Nevertheless the frivolous man of the West stands aghast at the melancholy idea the Mohammedan has of diverting himself. We are said to be *tristes* in our amusements in England, but in spite of Ibsen and Macterlink, we have not yet naturalized *khatmas* of the Korân. All the same, as we have seen, the Cairene knows how to make the most of what to us seem singularly unpromising incentives to revelry. The feast of St. Simon and St. Jude does not suggest delirious hilarity to our unimaginative souls; but the Cairene will run wild with delight—in the Muslim degree—upon a similar festival of one of his favourite saints. But then he is still a happy child—not a nineteenth-century English child with portentous possibilities of *Sehnsucht*, but a real child capable of simple, unreasoning enjoyment.

CHAPTER VIII

CHRISTIAN BABYLON

It is curious how easily we reconcile ourselves to the existence of a vast chasm in history. The story of the Pharaohs is familiar to every one. From Cheops to Rameses, and again on to Ptolemy Philadelphus and Cleopatra, the annals of Egypt are full of names and events that are household words. So at the other end of the vista of the ages, most people who have travelled, or read travels, have heard of the Arab conqueror of Egypt, 'Amr, who pitched his tent near where Cairo now stands, and there founded the city which was called Fustât or "the Tent," the ruins of which Europeans have renamed "Old Cairo;" many have read of the crazy Khalif El-Hâkim, founder of the Druse religion; of the great Saladin, soldan of Egypt and most chivalrous of warriors; of the long line of Slave Kings or Mamlûks, who filled their cities with palaces and mosques and works of art, which, even in their decay, are the wonder and delight of the beholder, and the torment of the covetous. These two ends of the history of Egypt are familiar ground to ordinary readers. But between them stretches a period of blank darkness, which few attempt to penetrate—darkness which the names of Zenobia, Cyril, and Hypatia only render more visible. As you stand in the great temple of Philae, the Holy Island where Osiris sleeps, you see that the portico of the Egyptian temple was once a chapel, St. Stephen's, and there, written in Greek, are the words, "This good work was done by the well-beloved of God, the Abbot-Bishop Theodore;" and as

the eye wanders over the walls, other Christian legends are encountered—"The cross has conquered and will ever conquer," and more to similar purpose. Abbot Theodore's name, which is all we know of him, represents the dark period of later Egyptian history; he stands in the gap between the extinction of the worship of Isis and the Muslim call to prayer. The mass was then celebrated at Philae, where once worshippers had crowded to pay their vows at the tomb of Osiris, where now Arab dragomans, conducting English tourists, prostrate themselves to the God of Islâm.

For two centuries and a half, from the Edict of Theodosius (A.D. 379) to the Arab conquest (641), the state religion of Egypt was Christianity, though the old worship of the country still held out awhile in the corners of the land. But long before that famous edict—that theological *coup d'état*—Christianity had taken a firm hold of the Delta; and Christian recluses, imitating the asceticism of the votaries of Serapis, betook themselves to caves and desert places, there to subdue the flesh and the devil by prayer and fasting. To Egypt belongs the debatable honour of having invented monasticism. The followers of St. Mark had scarcely seen the third century before they were settled in scattered communities all over the Delta, and had already begun to formulate what is known as "the Egyptian rule." We do not yet know how much we in the British Isles owe to these remote hermits. It is more than probable that to them we are indebted for the first preaching of the gospel in England, where, till the coming of Augustine, the Egyptian monastic rule prevailed. But more important is the belief that Irish Christanity, the great civilising agent of the early Middle Ages among the northern nations, was the child of the Egyptian Church. Seven Egyptian monks are buried at Disert Ulidh, and there is much in the ceremonies and architecture of Ireland in the earliest time that reminds one of still earlier Christian remains in Egypt. Every one knows that the handicraft of the Irish monks in the ninth and tenth centuries far excelled anything that could be found elsewhere in Europe; and if the Byzantine-looking decoration of their splendid gold and silver

work, and their unrivalled illuminations, can be traced to the influence of Egyptian missionaries, we have more to thank the Copts for than has been imagined.

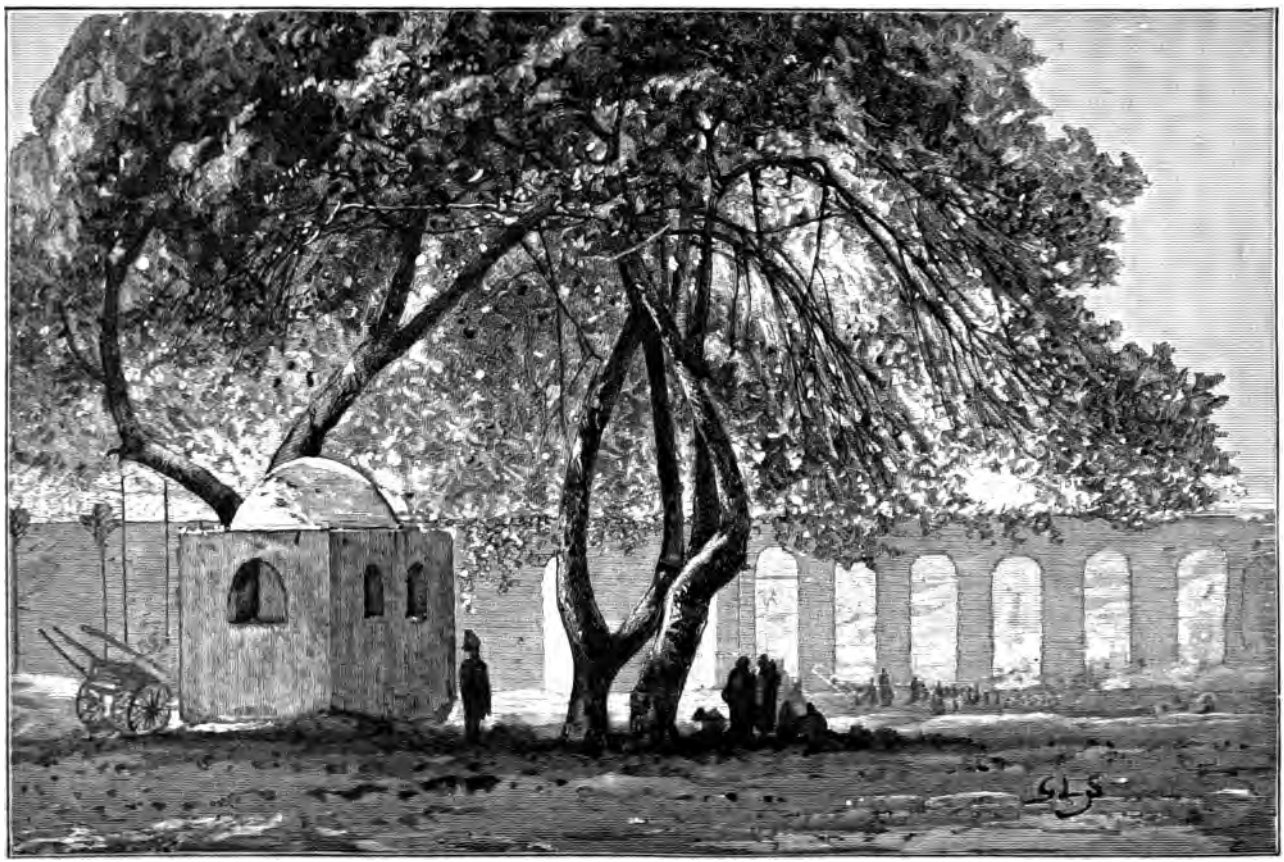
This early Egyptian Church is indeed the Coptic Church, though it was not distinguished by the name till the separation effected in 451 by the orthodox decision of the Council of Chalcedon. Copt is simply Gupt, Gypt, or Egyptian; and the Coptic Church means nothing more than the Church of Egypt, as separated by the adoption of the heresy of Eutyches. The Egyptian Christians were as much Copts before as after the Council of Chalcedon; but it was their devotion to a metaphysical definition that made them a distinct church, and to this they owe at once their misfortunes and their interest. By their adhesion to the Nicaean definition of the single nature of Christ—that "Christ being made man is one Nature, one Person, one Will, is also God the Word, and at the same time Man born of the Virgin Mary; so that to him belong all the attributes and properties of the Divine as well as of the human nature"—the Copts subjected themselves to persecution and isolation, and, sharing in none of the changes and developments of the other churches, preserved in their scanty and neglected community, unchanged for fourteen hundred years, the ancient tradition and practice of the fifth century. Their implacable hatred of the Greeks or Melekites ("Royalists" or Church and State men) induced the Copts or Jacobites to throw themselves into the arms of the Arab conqueror, when he invaded Egypt in the seventh century; and though their shameful surrender at first procured them a considerable measure of toleration, they were not long in discovering how fatal a blunder they had committed. The Muslim persecutions of the Copts were no whit more cruel than the contemporary Christian persecutions of the Jews, but they were not the less abominable. Not a century had passed since the covenant with 'Amr, when the Muslim governors of the Khalifs began to extort unlawful taxes from their Christian subjects, upon pain of grievous penalties. Monks were branded on the hand, and those found without the

brand had the hand cut off; humiliating sumptuary rules were devised; the Copts were compelled to wear a distinguishing garb of any ridiculous colour, were forbidden to ride except on asses and mules, and were ordered to hang wooden effigies of the devil at their doors. Every now and then some rising, or a mere street quarrel, would be made the pretext for a wholesale massacre; and on one of these occasions sixty churches were razed to the ground. It was no wonder that millions of Copts from time to time embraced the faith of their rulers.

But in spite of persecution, in spite of the apostasy of the weaker brethren, the Coptic Church still preserved a painful existence. There is something truly heroic in the constancy of these ignorant people—for the Coptic priesthood was never famous for learning—to the faith of their forefathers. They still persevered in the celebration of the rites of their religion, though the loop-holed walls, massive doors, and secret passages of their surviving churches testify to the perils that attended such solemnities. From time to time many of them waxed rich, as the gorgeous adornments of these churches show; for the Copts have ever been the accountants and clerks of Mohammedan Egypt, and while their masters might exhaust the refinements of persecution upon the obstinate Christians, they could not do without their skill in reckoning and scriveners' work. Aided by this monopoly, and supported by a dogged adherence to their ancient faith, the Copts present to this day the curious spectacle of a people who have stood still for ages, and, through many centuries of burning persecution, have preserved their individuality and their traditions. They are still a people apart, less mixed with alien blood than any other inhabitants of the Nile valley; their features recall those of the ancient Egyptians, as we see them on the monuments, much more than do the faces of the Muslim population. Copts, Gypts, Egyptians, they are indeed the true survivors of the people whom Pharaoh ruled, and who built the pyramids of Gîza. And not only in person but in language the Copts are a remnant of ancient Egypt. Their tongue, preserved

in their liturgy and recited to-day in their churches, is the lineal descendant of the language of the hieroglyphics and of the Rosetta stone. For ordinary purposes of course they use the Arabic of their neighbours, but the sacred speech of their religion is still partly understood by the priests, and retains its place of honour before the Arabic translation in the services of the church. By another curious freak of conservatism they preserve this ancient language, not in the script that belonged to it—the cursive development of the picture writing of the monuments—but in the bold uncial character of early Greek manuscripts. Thus the Copts combine the language of the Pharaohs with the alphabet of Cyril; and they use the two to express the dogmas of the primitive Christian Church, unchanged since the fifth century of Grace. No more extraordinary combination can be imagined; none fraught with stranger historical associations. A people of the race of the Pharaohs, speaking the very words of Rameses, writing them with the letters of Cadmus, and embalming in the sentences thus written a creed and liturgy which twelve centuries of persecution have not been able to wrest from them or alter a jot, are indeed worthy of more than a passing attention.

Notwithstanding their many-sided interest, the Copts have been persistently neglected by students of ancient and modern Egypt. It is not very difficult to explain this neglect. The modern Copt, despite the inheritance of ethnical, linguistic, and religious memories that has descended upon him, possesses the defects of a subject race. Centuries of persecution may leave the people constant to their faith and traditions, but they cannot come out unscathed from the degrading influences of protracted subjection. The Copt is servile, too often venal, as his patriarchs and bishops were in most periods of the past; he truckles to the great and domineers over the helpless, and in the art of lying stands supreme. His manner is sullen and reserved, and this is not improved by his devotion to date-spirit. At accounts, as has been said, he is an adept; but in other things he remains in a



A TOMB IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF CAIRO.

condition of dense ignorance. He knows nothing, as a rule, about the history of his Church, its traditions, or language. And of all Egyptians the Coptic priest is, to say truth, the most uncompromising in filth. That "cleanliness is next to godliness" is a doctrine much better understood by the Mohammedan than the Christian in the East. With all his ignorance and degradation the Coptic scribe is conceited and bigoted to an extent that none but those who have seen him in power at a village law court can imagine. The Coptic secretary is the soul of Egyptian official life, or was, until England turned her microscope upon the administration, and it is to be feared that his practice was in no respect superior to the mudîr, his master; while in bribery, or rather in the taking of bribes, the Coptic secretary is without a peer.

These are the vices of servitude, and are no more to be attributed to the people's race or form of religion than the liver of an Anglo-Indian is to be ascribed to his English birth. The time is coming when the Copt may have a chance of rehabilitating the character he has been losing for so many centuries. Persecution has ceased of late years. The descendants of Mohammed 'Aly have favoured their Christian subjects, and raised them to some of the highest posts in the country; even Coptic pashas are not unknown. Besides this, the Copts are beginning to wake up to the necessity of education, and their schools are undergoing a gradual process of reform which was much needed. We may hope before long to see the good results of the spirit now being developed among the younger generation, though it will take time to eradicate the fruits of prolonged subjection. At present, there is no doubt that the coldness with which travellers like Lane and Klunzinger have looked upon the Copts is natural, and the neglect which has befallen their singularly interesting community is not so surprising as it would at first seem. But in future years we may hope to find them deserving of sympathy and respect as much for themselves as for their history and antiquities.

Whatever may be thought of the Copts individually, there can be no question that historically they possess a peculiar fasci-

nation. Their history, however, is not at present to be read in their written documents, and perhaps never will be. The Coptic literature, so far as it is known, enshrines only religious books, and does not contain a single historical record. This may be owing to their many persecutions, and to the burning of most of their libraries, when the priests would naturally exert themselves rather to save the sacred volumes than to rescue those of secular contents. As it is, we are compelled to read the history of the Copts in the pages of a Muslim writer, El-Makrîzy, a man of genius and remarkable learning, but still a Mohammedan, and not unprejudiced in regard to heretical sects. Beyond El-Makrîzy's history, written in the fifteenth century, we have very little to go upon in the way of literary documents. There are gaps and dark places that will probably never be filled and illumined; unless, among the manuscript treasures that have survived their Coptic possessors' passion for kindling fires with codices, may some day be discovered the long-sought annals of the Church of Egypt. This poverty of literary comment renders the study of the existing Coptic monuments extremely important. In spite of the wholesale destruction and spoliation which accompanied the Muslim persecutions, when all the Alexandrian churches fell, and doubtless the majority of the Christian institutions throughout the land disappeared, there still remain a large number of Coptic convents scattered throughout Egypt. Every traveller knows the quaint Christian community of Old Cairo, where six ancient churches and their surrounding ecclesiastical establishments find shelter and protection in the massive walls and towers and bastions of the Roman fortress of Babylon. This is the greatest Coptic settlement in Egypt, but the land is full of them. Up the Nile we see lonely convents perched on the summits of precipitous cliffs; or, striking across the strip of cultivated land which constitutes Upper Egypt, we find isolated monasteries hugging the edge of the desert. The remains of Coptic houses all over Egypt testify to the ubiquity of Christian settlements in early times. In the region about Arsinoë, Rufinus found ten thousand

monks; at Oxyrhyncus there were other ten thousand, and twenty thousand nuns. "Pagan temples and buildings had been turned to monastic uses: the hermitages outnumbered the dwelling-houses; in fact the land 'so swarmed with monks that their chaunts and hymns by day and by night made the whole country one church of God.'" With due allowance for exaggeration, there is no doubt that the upper valley of the Nile was then very thickly sprinkled with monasteries and other religious institutions. Those that remain are not few, and are as interesting as they are unexplored. The "Convent of the Pulley" on Gebel Et-Teyr, the "White Monastery" at Suhâg, said to have been founded by the Empress Helena, the cluster of churches at Negâda, near Thebes, the convent of St. John, near Antinoë, the churches of Balliâna, Esnê, the Fayyûm, Bibba, and many other places, still stand to bear witness to the pervading influence of Christianity in Egypt. Besides the monasteries of the Nile, those of St. Paul and St. Antony in the Eastern desert, and the group of convents in the Nitrian valley, where Curzon found his precious store of manuscripts, show that the Coptic monks spread themselves over the deserts to the confines of Egypt, and the great oasis of El-Khârga tells the same tale.

Of Coptic churches none is more typical and at the same time more full of interest than the cluster at Babylon. The neighbouring monastery of Abu-s-Seyfeyn, or "The Two-Sworded," erected in memory of a valiant Coptic saint, is also interesting, and contains the finest inlaid screen and the largest number of pictures of any Coptic church in Egypt. Nor can one pass the little Deyr El-Benât, or "Convent of the Maidens," without a visit; for here, in latticed chambers, shaded by ancient trees, a score of Coptic girls find a tranquil retreat, which has all the charm and none of the austerity of conventual life. These Coptic nuns, who are chiefly selected among orphans and those who have no means of support, including widows as well as virgins, are not condemned to spend their days in religious exercises. They enjoy themselves in a quiet, sedate manner, and are allowed to visit

A WAYSIDE WELL.

their friends in the neighbouring metropolis; and during their noviciate they may leave the convent when they please, and even enter the holy state of matrimony.

But to see Coptic churches at their best we must go to the Castle of Babylon at Old Cairo. The name appears to be a corruption of Bab-li-On, the "gate of On" or of Heliopolis, an ancient city, which is itself replete with impressive associations. Near Cairo, forming the southern point of the triangle which included the land of Goshen, stands a solitary obelisk of red granite, the oldest but one in Egypt—the only sign remaining that there was once a "City of the Sun." In the plain of Matarîya, before this lonely stone, the Turks fought the battle that won Egypt from the Memlûks in 1517, and Kléber gained his famous victory in 1800 over the very site of Heliopolis, or On, the oldest seat of learning in the world. There stood the famous temple of On of which Potipherah, the father of Joseph's wife, was priest; here Pianchi, the Ethiopian priest-king, eight centuries B.C., washed at the "Fountain of the Sun," and made offerings of white bulls, milk, perfume, incense, and all kinds of sweet-scented woods, and entering the temple "saw his father Ra [the sun-god] in the sanctuary." Heliopolis was the university of the most ancient civilisation in the world, the forerunner of all the schools of Europe. Here, in all probability, Moses was instructed by the priests of Ra in "all the wisdom of the Egyptians;" here, too, Herodotus cross-questioned the same priesthood with varying success; here Plato came to study, and Eudoxus the mathematician to learn astronomy; and here Strabo was shown the houses where the famous Greeks had lived. Of this seat of learning and focus of religion nothing but the obelisk remains. "The images of Beth-Shemesh" (the "House of the Sun") have indeed been "broken," and "the houses of the Egyptians' gods" have been "burned with fire."*

Beside the obelisk is an ancient sycamore, riven with age and hacked with numberless names, beneath which tradition hath it

* Jeremiah xliii. 13.

that the Holy Family rested in their flight into Egypt, and which is hence known as the "Virgin's Tree." Near by is a spring of fresh water—a rare sight in this brackish land—which, it is said, became sweet because the Bambino was bathed there. From the spots where the drops fell from his swaddling clothes, after they, too, had been washed in this sacred spring, sprang up balsam-trees, which, it was believed, flourished nowhere else. There is no evidence for these fancies, and, of course, the sycamore is but a descendant of the supposed original, as it was not planted till after 1672. But the circumstances that a temple was built by the Hebrew Onias for the worship of his countrymen near here, and that Jewish gardeners were brought here for the culture of the balsam-trees, give the tale a certain fitness. "The tradition is no more than a legend, yet there is no place in Egypt to which the visit of the Holy Family would be more fit, than to the almost deserted seat of learning, when it was already the parent of the great university under whose widespreading shadow grew and flourished those Hebrew and Christian schools which had so mighty an influence in the annals of the early Church. Thus Heliopolis then represented that which was passing away, not without hope of that which was to come. The least monumental of all the sites of Egypt, without temple or tomb, nor any record but the obelisk, is yet eloquent of greater things than the solemn pyramids of Memphis or the storied temples of Thebes. What these tell is rather of Egypt's history than the world's; the idea that Heliopolis suggests is the true progress of the whole human race. For here was the oldest link in the chain of the schools of learning. The conqueror has demolished the temple; the city, with the houses of the wise men, has fallen into hopeless ruin, downtrodden by the thoughtless peasant, as he drives his plough across the site. Yet the name and the fame of the City of the Sun charms the stranger as of old while, standing beside the obelisk, he looks back through the long and stately avenue of the ages that are past and measures the gain in knowledge that patient scholars have won. He sees that phoenix-like power

of renewing her youth, which gives all wisdom the deathlessness which is at once a type and a presage of immortality.*

But if Heliopolis is now no more, the "gate of On" still survives, and the name Bab-li-On may easily account for the tradition, reported by Strabo and Diodorus, which ascribes the foundation of the fortress to exiles from the greater Babylon. The present remains, however, are Roman, and date probably either from the end of the first or from the third century A.D. The Arabs call the place by several names, of which Kasr Esh-Shem'a, the "Castle of the Beacon," is the most common, and refers, no doubt, to the use of the tall towers as beacons. The outside of the castle is imposing enough, though the walls have almost disappeared in some places, and the relentless sand of the desert has covered up some fifteen feet of their height. We can, however, distinguish the greater part of the irregular oblong outline of the fortress, and five of the bastions and the two circular towers are in good preservation. As we survey the massive Roman walls, with their alternate five courses of stone and three of brick—the origin, perhaps, of the red and yellow stripes of the Mohammedan mosques and houses—we can understand how much the surrender of Babylon, out of mere sectarian spite, by the Jacobite Copts to the Arab conqueror must have meant in the annals of Muslim conquests. They got rid of the Melekites, but soon found what it was they had foolishly taken in their stead.

When we enter the stronghold the strange character of the fortress grows upon us. Passing through narrow lanes, narrower and darker and dustier even than the back alleys of Cairo, we are struck by the deadly stillness of the place. The high houses that shut in the street have little of the lattice ornament that adorns the thoroughfares of Cairo; the grated windows are small and few, and but for an occasional heavy door half open, and here and there the sound of a voice in the recesses of the houses, we might question whether the fortress was inhabited at all. Nothing,

* R. S. Poole, *Cities of Egypt*, p. 117.

THE VIRGIN'S TREE, HELIOPOLIS.

certainly, indicates that these plain walls contain six sumptuous churches, with their dependent chapels, each of which is full of carvings, pictures, vestments, and furniture, which in their way cannot be matched. A Coptic church is like a Mohammedan harîm—it must not appear from the outside. Just as the studiously plain exterior of many a Cairo house reveals nothing of the latticed court within, surrounded by rooms where inlaid dados, tiles, carved and painted ceilings, and magnificent carpets, glow in the soft light of the stained windows; so a Coptic church makes no outward show. High walls hide everything from view. The Copts are shy of visitors, and the plain exteriors are a sufficient proof of their desire to escape that notice which in bygone days aroused Mohammedan cupidity and fanaticism, and now too often excite the no less dangerous envy of the moneyed traveller. Yet if they will receive us, we shall find that among the thousand delightful and ineffaceable memories of the "Mother of the World, the guarded city of Cairo," few are more lasting or more replete with moving associations than the recollections of a visit to the "Castle of the Beacon."

After passing through a strong gateway, and traversing a vestibule, or ascending some stairs, you find yourself in a small but beautifully finished basilica, gazing at a carved choir-screen that any cathedral in England might envy. In the dim light you see rows of valiant saints looking down at you from above the sanctuary and over the screens, and great golden texts in Coptic and Arabic, to the glory of God; while above, the arches of the triforium over the aisles show where other treasures of art are probably to be found. The general plan of a Coptic church is basilican, but there are many points of wide divergence from the strict pattern; the Byzantine feature of the dome is almost universal, and sometimes the whole building is roofed over with a cluster of a dozen domes. The church consists of a nave and side aisles, waggon-vaulted (exactly like the early Irish churches, and like no others), and very rarely has transepts, or approaches the cruciform shape. The sparse marble columns that divide the

nave from the aisles generally return round the west end, and form a *narthex* or counter-choir, where is sunk the Epiphany tank, once the scene of complete immersions, but now used only for the feet-washing of Maundy Thursday. The church is also divided cross-wise into three principal sections, besides the narthex. The rearmost is the women's place, which the judicious Copts put behind the men's, and thereby prevent any disturbance of devotions much more effectually than if the two sexes had been ranged side by side as in some Western churches. A lattice-work screen divides the women's portion from the men's, which is always much larger and more richly decorated, and the men's division is similarly partitioned off from the choir by another screen, while the altars, three in number, are placed each in a separate apse, surmounted by a complete (not semicircular) dome, and veiled by the most gorgeous screen of all, formed of ivory and ebony crosses and geometrical panels, superbly carved with arabesques, and surmounted by pictures and golden texts in Coptic and Arabic letters.* During the celebration the central folding doors are thrown back, the silver-embroidered curtain is withdrawn, and the high altar is displayed to the adoring congregation, just as it is in the impressive ceremonial of St. Isaac's cathedral at St. Petersburg. The carved doors and the silver-thread curtain, the swinging lamps and pendent ostrich eggs, prepare us for something more gorgeous than the nearly cubical plastered brick or stone altar, with its silk covering, and the invariable recess in the east side, which originally had a more mystic signification, but is now only used for the burying of the cross in a bed of rose-leaves on Good Friday, whence it will be disinterred on Easter-day. The Coptic altar stands detached

* See Mr. A. J. Butler's *Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt* (i. 86-9), which for the first time presents a thorough and scholarly account of these wonderful monuments. Mr. Butler's zeal and research need no praise of mine to augment their value, but I cannot resist this opportunity of saying how grateful every one who is interested in the art of Egypt must be to his admirable and laborious investigations of every detail of Coptic antiquities. His work is the highest authority we possess on this obscure but fascinating subject, and from it many of the facts here cited are derived.

from the wall of the sanctuary, which is often coated with slabs of coloured marble, like the dados one sees in the mosques, or with mosaic of the peculiar Egyptian style; while above are painted panels or frescoes representing the twelve apostles, with Christ in the midst in the act of benediction. Over the altar spreads a canopy or baldacchino, which is also richly painted with figures of angels. The central sanctuary with its altar is divided off from the side altars by lattice screens.

The reason for three alters is very curious. On the great festivals, such as Easter and Palm Sunday, more than one celebration of the eucharist must take place, and the Coptic principle is that the altar, like the congregation, must be "fasting;" hence a fresh altar is needed for each celebration on the same day.

The vessels and utensils of the altar are sometimes very finely worked. The silver chalice, however, has too often disappeared and been replaced by a glass cup, and the paten is generally rather plain. A dome is used to support the corporal over the bread, and the communion is administered in a spoon, the wafer being put into the wine and both taken together. A curious part of the furniture is the Ark, which holds the chalice during the rite of consecration; and scarcely less interesting is the flabellum, or fan for keeping gnats off the chalice, which is often exquisitely fashioned of repoussé silver. Similar fans are represented in the Irish Book of Kells. There is never a crucifix, but reliquaries are not uncommon, though their place is not on the altar. The Coptic church forbids the worship of relics, but every church has its bolster full of them, and the devout believer attaches considerable importance to their curative properties. Sometimes the most beautiful object in metal-work in a Coptic church is the silver textus-case—corresponding to the Irish *cumhdach*—in which the copy of the Gospels is supposed to be sealed up, though generally a few leaves alone remain inside. It is often a fine example of silver chasing and repoussé work, and is reverently brought from the altar where it reposes, to the officiating deacon, who places it on the lectern while he reads from another copy. The lectern itself is a

favourite subject for decoration. That from the Mu'allaka church, now in the Coptic cathedral at Cairo, is covered with the beautiful inlaid and carved panelling which is familiar in the doors and pulpits of mosques. It stands in front of the sanctuary, and the *ambon* or pulpit, which is also often elaborately ornamented, is at the north-east corner of the nave.

Of the six churches contained within the fortress of Babylon, three are of the highest interest; for, though the Greek church of St. George, perched on the top of the round Roman tower, is finely decorated with Damascus and Rhodian tiles and silver lamps, the tower itself, with its central well and great staircase, and curious radiating chambers, is more interesting than the church above it. Of the three principal Coptic churches, that of St. Sergius, or Abu-Sarga, is the most often visited, on account of the tradition that it was in its crypt that the Holy Family rested when they journeyed to the land of Egypt. The crypt is certainly many centuries older than the church above it, which dates from the tenth century, though we need not accept the testimony of the supposed manger to prove that the crypt goes back to the time of Christ. Indeed it is not easy to see what would induce Joseph to carry about the manger with him. The crypt may have belonged to the fortress, or it may have been in existence before the latter was built round it; for it is quite possible that a very early church may have stood on this site. The church itself is notable for a fine screen, and close to it a remarkable specimen of early Coptic figure-carving, with representations of the nativity, and of warrior saints, in high relief. Another example of this style of deep carving exists at the church of Saint Barbara, where it is hidden away in a chapel in the triforium.

Besides Abu-Sarga and Kadîsa-Barbâra, there remains a third and very interesting Coptic church to be mentioned. This is suspended between two bastions of the Roman wall, over a gate with a classical pediment and a sculptured eagle. It is called from its position the Mu'allaka or "hanging" church. It is remarkable in many ways, partly for being the oldest of the Baby-

lon churches, since the smaller church which forms part of it probably dates from the third century—a hypothesis which its position on the as yet undamaged bastion confirms—and partly on account of the entire absence of domes. The Mu'allaka has other peculiarities: it has absolutely no choir, and the daïs in front of the shallow eastern apses has to serve the purpose; and it is double aisled on the north side. The carved screen in the north aisle has the unique property of being filled in with thin ivory panels, which must have shone with a rosy tint when the lamps behind were lighted. The sculptured pulpit is especially beautiful; it stands on "fifteen delicate Saracenic columns, arranged in seven pairs, with a leader." Not the least curious part about the "suspended" church is its hanging garden, where the bold experiment of planting palms in mid air has succeeded in perpetuating the tradition that it was here that the Virgin first broke fast with a meal of dates on her arrival in Egypt.

This is not the place to enter into the doctrine and ritual of the Coptic church. The appalling Lenten fast of the Copts, which lasts fifty-five days, and involves total abstention from food from sunrise to sunset during each of those days, no doubt suggested the only less rigorous Muslim fast of Ramadân. The Coptic sacrament of matrimony has certain elements of the grotesque in it; but most of the ceremonial of the church possesses a dignity and the sweet savour of antiquity which must redeem any minor absurdities. No one can stand unmoved in a Coptic church during the celebration of the Mass, or hear the worshippers shout with one voice, just as they did some fifteen hundred years ago, the loud response, "I believe This is the Truth," without emotion. Through fiery persecution they have clung to their truth with a heroism that is only the more wonderful when we consider their weakness; and however partial and ignorant their interpretation of truth, we cannot withhold the respect that is the due of those who have come out of great tribulation and remained steadfast to their faith.

CHAPTER IX

MEMPHIS

An hour's ride from Cairo carries us back through the long vista of history to the earliest monuments of civilised man. We leave the mosque of 'Amr, the oldest building of Cairo, yet which has seen only twelve centuries pass since its foundation; we leave the old fort of Babylon, which still keeps us fettered to the Christian Era; and we stand before the Pyramids of Gîza, which have looked down upon the whole course of man's development, as we measure it in our puny Western scale, from ages when Noah had not built his ark, when Phoenician and Greek had not even a name, when the oldest of all the Troys was still in the dim future. At a time when our Aryan forefathers were pasturing their herds on the Asian steppes, and when a tent or reed hut were the highest achievements of architecture among other races, the Egyptians in the Nile valley were building those stupendous monuments which are still the wonder of the engineer, and were painting those frescoes and modelling those statues which represent a stage of civilisation to which the Greeks did not attain till thirty centuries later, and which half the world has not reached even now. The people who built the Pyramids four thousand years before Christ were no barbarians, no nomad tribes or lacustrine paddlers; they were people with a settled philosophy, a lofty religion, a remarkable and individual art, a refined and complex society. If the progress of man from savagery to civilisation marched then by the same slow labouring steps as in later

times, the Egyptians must have been a nation for thousands of years before they could have built Memphis and its chain of giant sepulchres. It is like standing on the border of infinitude when we think of this awful antiquity. The immeasurable ages of geology and the weird traces of primitive man give one an overwhelming sense of insignificance, but these tell us only of a savage existence, with scarcely a touch of a higher life. The monuments of Egypt show us man living as civilised a life as ever Roman conceived—as civilised in some of the best senses as any life we lead now—and there they stop short, and meet us like a closed door, bearing on its threshold the footprints of myriads of inhabitants, but suffering no man to enter and see them.

It is not the age of the Pyramids that awes one most, but the thought of the unknown past that preceded their mighty birthday. Five thousand years ago they stood where they stand now, but the men who then looked upon them belonged to another immeasurable antiquity when Pyramids were not, of which we see the end but not the process, and whereof there remains no record but the result. In the brisk bustling bazars of Bûlâk, where traders and dealers meet to exchange their goods, the brown Nile labourer may be seen bringing the produce of the Sûdân and of the upper valley. In appearance he is much the same being that he was when Memphis was founded; but now he can neither build, nor paint, nor write. Turn into the Museum where Mariette stored the treasures his unresting labours extorted from the grasp of the desert sand, and you will see the statues and pictures and the writing on the walls, which people of the same race as the modern Egyptians produced in lavish quantities and amazing perfection. One of this very people's descendants, a modern fellâh, is looking at the works of his forefathers in stupid wonder. He does not understand them, but he knows that he and his fellow-countrymen can do nothing like them now. We could tell him that his people have done nothing like them for the last twenty centuries and more. How they ever came to do them, why they and not their neighbours did them, and

what took away the power of such works from them, are some of the questions that crowd upon the mind as, standing on the summit of the Great Pyramid, one gazes down upon the long fringe of gigantic cairns that border the Libyan desert for a distance of forty-five miles, and upon the ruined traces of what was once called the "Perfect Abode"—Memphis, the oldest historical city of the world.

When Menes came northwards from his original seat at This, and set about founding a great city near the head of the Delta, his first undertaking was boldly to turn the course of the river. By dykes and dams he diverted the Nile from its channel beside the Libyan mountains, so as to form a barrier between the new city and the tribes of the East, and on the former bed he built Memphis. We are told that there were palaces and temples and schools and beautiful squares and streets in this new city of six thousand years ago; there was a famous citadel called the "White Wall," a fine port upon the Nile, and in later days a special quarter for the Phoenician traders who brought their merchandise to Egypt. So large was the city that even in the time of its decline it was half a day's journey to cross it from north to south. For five thousand years Memphis was the first or the second city of Egypt. It was only second to Sais when Herodotus journeyed there, and even when Alexandria was founded Memphis still stood next in rank. The Arab invasion and the building of Fustât at last destroyed it, for the inhabitants migrated to the new capital hard by. But long after this it was still a wonder to travellers, and that delightful writer, the learned physician 'Abd-el-Latîf of Baghdâd, describes Memphis as it was in the beginning of the thirteenth century with his quaint and graphic pencil. "Its ruins," he says, "still present a crowd of wonders that bewilder the intellect and which the most eloquent of men would vainly attempt to describe. The more one considers the city, the greater grows the admiration which it inspires, and each new glance at its ruins is a fresh cause of delight. Scarcely has it given birth to one idea when it suggests another still more marvellous; and when you believe

you have thoroughly grasped it, Memphis at once convinces you that what you have conceived is still far behind the truth." The wonderful monolithic green chamber of brecchia verde, once the shrine of a golden statue with jewelled eyes, was still to be seen there, and the sphinxes and walls and gates of the temple of Ptah, the Egyptian Vulcan, originator and fashioner of all things, were still standing; but even then the insane greed of treasure-hunters had begun to work its disastrous effects. From the temples and tombs of Memphis to the ruins of Merv, the oriental mind has associated the remains of antiquities with the presence of concealed treasure. 'Abd-el-Latîf records with indignation the irreparable destruction wrought by "people without sense" in this childish pursuit, and tells how they mutilated the statues (whom they took for guardians of the tombs), bored holes, wrenched off metal-work, and split up monoliths, in the hope of discovering hidden wealth. Most of the tombs and Pyramids have been impiously broken into and pillaged of whatever they contained, though it could never have repaid the pains of excavation to vulgar burglars without archaeological instinct. And when treasure was no longer expected, a worse thing came upon the monuments of Egypt: they were used as building materials for the walls and mosques and citadel of Cairo. Columns and slabs were carried over the river to the new capital; the splendid masonry which had stood unshaken for five thousand years was used for the beautiful but unstable monuments of Arab art; and the wonderful ruins that excited the admiration of the old traveller of Baghdâd are now vanished. Of all that splendour and beauty nothing remains; as we wander among the palms that fatten on the site of Memphis, a few fragments of what may have been the temple, and the great half-buried, half-drowned colossus of Rameses II. prone upon its face, are all that remain to remind us of the oldest city in the world. "The images have ceased out of Noph." *

Even the Pyramids were not spared. 'Abd-el-Latîf tells us how he saw the workmen of El-Melik El-'Azîz, son of Saladin,

* Ezek. xxx. 13.

PALM-GROVE AT MEMPHIS.

employed in 1196 in pulling down the Third or Red Pyramid, so called from its granite casing. A large body of engineers and miners pitched a camp close by, and with their united and continuous efforts achieved the removal of one or two stones a day. The blocks fell down with a tremendous shock, and buried themselves in the sand, whence they were extricated with immense toil and then laboriously broken up. At the end of eight months the treasury was exhausted and the work of destruction abandoned. To look at the quantity of stone taken away you would think, says the observer, that the whole monument had been razed to the ground; but when you lift your eyes to the Pyramid itself, it is hard to see that it had suffered the least diminution. One day 'Abd-el-Latîf asked one of the workmen, who had assisted in laboriously removing one stone from its place, whether he would put it up again for a thousand gold pieces? The man answered that he could not do it if the reward were many times multiplied. And so in spite of the efforts of man and the wearing of time, the Red Pyramid of Menkara still stands beside its two sisters at Gîza, and verifies the saying that "Time mocks all things, but the Pyramids laugh at Time." The Red Pyramid contained the tomb of a queen, Nitocris, of the seventh dynasty; and superstition has accumulated a number of traditions round this lady. Her rosy cheeks were celebrated and caused her to be confounded with the fair Rhodôpis, the Greek favourite of Amasis, who fell in love with her, as the Prince did with Cinderella, from a sight of her pretty sandal. Rhodôpis became the Loreley of Egyptian fairyland, and popular fancy imagined a beautiful treacherous woman who haunts the Red Pyramid and leaves bewitched travellers to their doom:—

> Fair Rhodopê, as story tells,
> The bright unearthly nymph who dwells
> 'Mid sunless gold and jewels hid,
> The Lady of the Pyramid.

To the present day the Arabs shun the Pyramids at night, and tell dreadful tales of the Ginn who frequent them.

PYRAMID OF STEPS, SAKKARA.

In front of the Second and Third Pyramids are ruins of what were doubtless temples where rites were performed in honour of the kings who built them; further away is the amazingly massive granite temple or tomb in which were found statues of Chefren, or Khafra, the builder of the Second Pyramid; and hard by is the most mysterious of all Egyptian monuments, the Sphinx—"Father of Terrors," the Arabs call it—a human-headed lion, the symbol of the rising sun, which stands a solemn sentinel on the approach to the Pyramid plateau.

A Pyramid is simply a cairn or barrow, only its stones are laid regularly and their edges are carefully finished, instead of being roughly thrown together. The principle of the Pyramid is almost always the same. A rocky eminence on the desert tract lying between the river and the Libyan hills, above the reach of the annual inundation, was excavated for the reception of the king's sarcophagus, and a sloping passage was cut to connect the royal sepulchre with the surface. Over the sepulchre, both to protect it from the inroads of the sand and to mark the spot, a large block of stones was erected, almost in the shape of a cube, but slightly tapering towards the top. This was done early in the king's reign, and if he died at this point his mummy was inserted into the tomb, a small pyramidal cap was put on the top of the block of stone, and triangular or wedge-shaped pieces were added to the sides, and a small Pyramid, effectually closing the royal sepulchre, was then complete. If the king, however, continued to reign, he deferred the cap and wedges, and, instead of them, put other blocks round the base, so as to form a second stage, upon which he erected another quasi-cube like the first. If the king died at this point, the cap and wedge-shaped side-pieces could be added, and the Pyramid thus completed would be one size larger than the first form. The longer the king lived the more numerous these stages became, so that it is possible to gauge roughly the duration of a king's reign by the height of his burial cairn. At least, this is Lepsius' theory, and it has not yet been bettered. There are sometimes other chambers besides the subterranean tomb

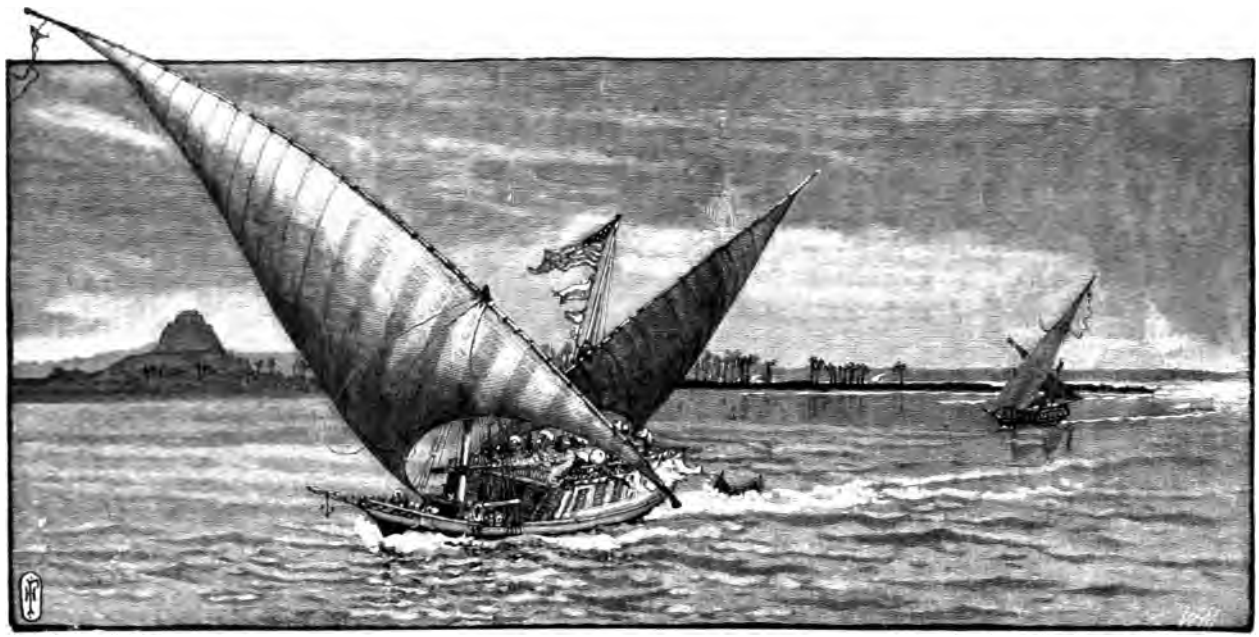
in Pyramids, which were probably substitutes for the latter in the more advanced stages of the building. The entrance to the tomb itself—generally a steep sloping passage, narrow and low—was carefully concealed, and ingenious devices, portcullises, and the like, were employed in order to prevent the sarcophagus being removed. The material of the Pyramids is usually stone from the neighbouring limestone quarries, with finer blocks brought over the river from Tura and El-Ma'asara; but some are of brick.*

As we consider the long line of Pyramids, each the sepulchral cairn of a king, we understand the irony of the Israelites' question, "Because there were no graves in Egypt hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" Egypt is indeed a country of graves, and there is a singular appropriateness in Hosea's prophecy, "Egypt shall gather them up: Memphis shall bury them" (ix. 6). The necropolis of Memphis is a huge burial-ground, with graves so big that the stones of some of them would form a wall round the whole French coast, and so high that St. Peter's at Rome would stand inside the Great Pyramid, "like a clock under a glass shade," if it were hollowed out. But all about the Pyramids the ground is furrowed and perforated with graves. The tombs of the families and officers of the kings are grouped around, and the walls are covered with sculptures depicting the life of the deceased. Nothing in all Egypt, the land of marvels, is more wonderful than the minute pictorial records of this peaceful country life of five or six thousand years ago, preserved in the tombs at Memphis and Sakkara. In them we see not only the portrait of the deceased, in size a demi-god, and of his diminutive wife, the mistress of the house—"beloved of her husband, his palm of pleasantness"—sculptured with marvellous fidelity to nature and with a realism that is almost terribly lifelike, but all the scenes of the great man's daily life; his cattle, goats and sheep, and fat oxen; villagers bringing their tribute of the produce of the nobleman's country estates; oxen drawing the plough, the overseer with his stick; every scene of agriculture, the large

* See my *Egypt* (1880), pp. 59—61.

ears of corn, the reaping and gleaning; the exciting hunt of the hippopotamus, who is entangled in the ropes in the very act of devouring his prey, while the sportsmen launch their javelins at him; the nets full of fish; the chase of the antelope; the struggles of wrestlers—every branch of labour and of diversion is found on the walls of the tombs. Over many of the pictures are inscriptions which are positively comic, as when the slaughterers of an ox comment on the various stages of the operation, or a captain of a ship calls his crew a set of apes. But the solemn side of existence is not forgotten amidst these cheerful scenes. Funeral processions and wailing men are engraved on the walls, and inscriptions are addressed to Anubis of the jackal head, the Hermes of the Egyptian religion, who guides the souls through the Under-world.

Nor are men and women alone honoured with these splendid resting-places. Under the Serapeum at Sakkara—the Ptolemaic temple, with its various chambers, priests' houses, and cells for ascetic recluses, which was dedicated to the strange mixed Graeco-Egyptian worship of Serapis—is the gigantic cemetery of Apis. This sacred bull, who was distinguished from common cattle by twenty-eight marks, such as a blaze on the forehead, a scarab under the tongue, a crescent on the flank, and the like, was entertained in solemn state, secluded behind a curtain, on a soft bed, in the temple of Ptah at Memphis, with his venerated mother in another stall, and a plentiful harîm of cows near by; and hither came those who would obtain his oracular verdicts: if he ate from their hands it was well; if not, their doom was decreed, as Eudoxus, the Greek astronomer, and Germanicus proved to their dismay. When his luxurious life came to its close, the bull Apis was buried with immense pomp and with costly rites, which sometimes drained the treasury of £20,000, in the burying-place of his ancestors at Sakkara. Here, in long galleries, with vaults on either side, rested the mummies of all the sacred bulls for nigh two thousand years, in huge sarcophagi of granite or other stone; each monolith, empty, weighing nearly sixty tons. When Mariette



PYRAMID OF MEYDÛM, FROM THE NILE.

opened this amazing city of dead bulls he found one vault which for some reason had escaped the violating hand of the treasure-seeker, and there in the mortar was the impress of the fingers of the mason who had set the last stone in the reign of Rameses II., before the birth of Moses; there in the dust were the imprints of the feet that had last trod the floor three thousand and more years ago; there were the votive offerings dedicated in the sacred vault by visitors who have been dead since nearly twice as long a period as we are distant from our Era—among them a tablet of Rameses' own son, high priest of Apis, and one of the chief dignitaries of the time of the Oppression of Israel. It is not wonderful that when the great explorer set foot in this tomb, which had remained inviolate for thirty-five eventful centuries, he was overwhelmed, and burst into tears.

CHAPTER X

THE FELLÂHÎN

EGYPT is before all things an agricultural country. Its wealth is in its crops; manufactures and industries merely divert the land and the people from their proper and most profitable employment. Those who have seen the rich plain of Abydos—well named "the granary of Egypt"—or the fertile fields of Thebes, or have traversed the luxuriant vegetation of lower Egypt, whose triangular form has procured it the name of the Delta (Δ), can alone realise the extraordinary productiveness of the soil. With careful management three crops a year can be raised out of the rich dark earth, and, if the land were equally distributed, there would be food and to spare for every one at the cost of comparatively light labour and next to no capital. Recent investigations have shown that the yield of each acre is not only sufficient to pay the taxes and the interest on borrowed capital, and to support the peasant proprietor, but ought to leave a considerable margin of profit. The yield of an acre in Egypt is worth at least a third more than what an English farmer can get out of even the best land in Great Britain, while rent, labour, taxes, and cost of living are all greatly in favour of the Egyptian. Practically the only important charge on the cultivator is the land-tax, which constitutes the rent, and does not average more than about a pound an acre, while the produce of that acre is worth from sixteen to twenty-five pounds a year. There is no such thing as income-tax, poor-rate, tithes, or the other burdens of the English farmer. The Egyptian peasant

pays his land-tax, and then he is free to reap the full profits of the fertile soil so cheaply acquired and retained.

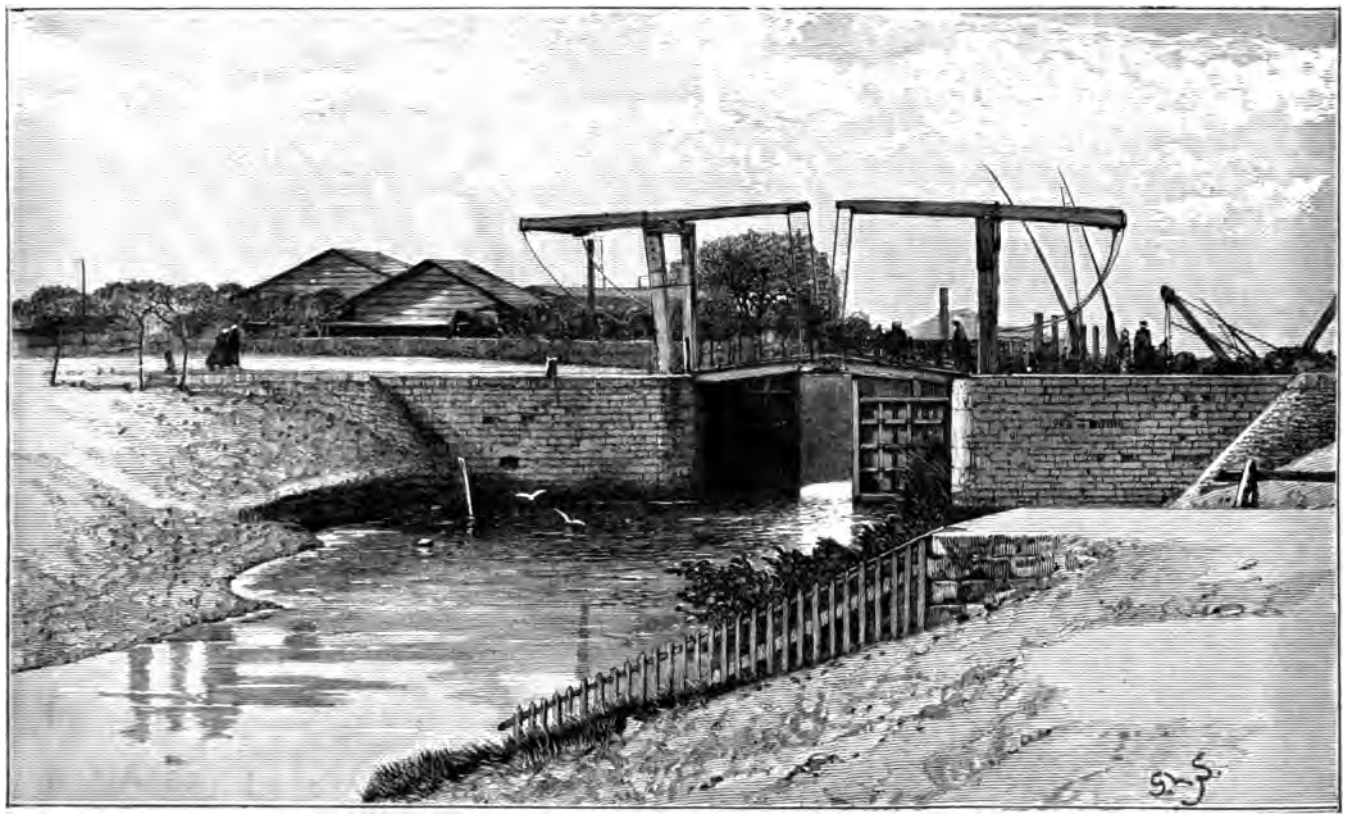
Such, at least, ought to be the case. Every Egyptian peasant proprietor ought to be well off. Unfortunately there are many circumstances that hinder this happy consummation. The land, it is true, will bear three crops a year; but in order to do so it needs scientific irrigation. The fertility of Egypt depends entirely on the Nile. Herodotus saw this more than a score of centuries ago, when he called Egypt "the gift of the river," δῶρον τοῦ ποταμοῦ, as we read in every book that has ever been written on this subject. The Nile in its annual inundation—the consequence of periodical rains in the Abyssinian mountains where the tributary called the Blue Nile has its source—spreads a thick layer of the black alluvial soil which it has carried down from the tropics over the surface of the fields on either side of its course; and it is this alluvial deposit that gives the land its unparalleled fertility and wholly supersedes the necessity for manuring and even for lying fallow. Wherever the water and its alluvial solution touches the land, seed can be sown and re-sown and rich harvests gathered. But the inundation of itself would not naturally spread much beyond the lowlands in the immediate neighbourhood of the banks. The higher lands would thus remain barren desert, as every spot in Egypt does remain, unless the Nile is brought to water it. The principal function of Egyptian agriculture, therefore, consists of artificially increasing the area, whilst controlling the flow, of the inundation. This is effected by a network of canals which intersects the whole country, and maps it out in squares like a chessboard. The Nile water is let into these canals in the inundation, instead of being allowed to spread at random over the fields, where it might do as much damage as benefit in its indiscriminate arrosion. Dams keep the water in the canals when the Nile begins to sink, and the water thus confined is used for irrigation as long as possible. In order to reach the higher lands, pumps and water-engines of various kinds are employed, by which the water is raised from the large low-level canals to higher

WATERING BUFFALOES.

channels, whence it can be spread over the fields by means of narrow drains.

It is clear, therefore, that the prosperous condition of the peasant farmer depends in a great degree upon the management of the irrigation system. Until recently, however, there was unhappily no system worthy of the name. The canals were badly constructed and unscientifically connected, and the engineers in charge of them were in the habit of selling the water, which is the rightful property of the people and the condition of their livelihood, to the highest bidder; so that a rich man always got all the water of the neighbourhood by a bribe to the engineer, while the lands of the poor were suffered to lie barren, or could with difficulty be rendered capable of bearing an exiguous crop by the unceasing toil of the peasants at clumsy hand water-engines. One of the worst features of the old system of canalisation was the manner in which the canals were kept up. This was done by the *corvée*, or forced labour, which meant that every landowner, up to the owner of one hundred acres, was bound to come in person, or pay a substitute, to work during the dry months of the year at the repair of the canals. The *corvée* labourer got no pay and no rations, his food had to be brought by his family from his village —often many miles away—and he had even to furnish his tools, which, however, generally consisted simply of his own fingers and a basket. He grubbed in the ground and filled his basket, and deposited its contents outside the embankment, and so the canal gradually became deeper. At night he slept without shelter or wrap. Half the adult male population of Upper Egypt were thus engaged for several months in the year, to the destruction of their second crops. From 1878 to 1880, 112,000 men were employed for the four or five months of "low Nile" every year upon the wasteful unorganized toil of the *corvée*.* Their health suffered—we are told that twenty thousand men died in making the Mahmûdîya Canal at Alexandria for Mohammed 'Aly—and

* See Mr. F. S. Clarke's admirable report on the condition of the agricultural population in Sir E. Baring's despatch, *Parl. Papers, Egypt*, No. 6, 1888.



LOCK ON THE FRESHWATER CANAL.

the work was badly done. As Lord Dufferin remarked, after a conscientious and penetrating inquiry, "five hundred men may be called out for two or three weeks for work which three hundred men could finish in three days," and half that number with proper tools and organization. "The *corvée* implies the annual withdrawal from agricultural labour of from one hundred thousand to one hundred and thirty thousand men for a period which varies from sixty to one hundred and twenty days." Organized gangs of workmen, furnished with spades and shovels and wheelbarrows, could do the work much better, and at infinitely less cost; for the *corvée* meant nothing less than the ruin of the people.

Added to the defects of the canal system and the corruption of the water engineers, the poverty and conservatism of the people and the shortsightedness of their rulers impose an unnecessary disability in the employment of primitive, laborious, and wasteful machines. Instead of clubbing together to buy steam pumps, or getting a loan for the purpose from the Government, the Egyptians as a body go on with their miserable *shadûfs* and their superior but still inadequate *sâkiyas*, and waste time and labour in doing badly by hand what experience in the Delta has shown can be done quickly, cheaply, and thoroughly by steam. The *shadûf* consists of a pole swinging between two posts after the fashion of a steel-yard balance, with a huge lump of Nile mud at the lower end and a rude bucket attached to the top of the longer arm by a light pole. The labourer pulls down the long arm by means of the hanging pole, till the bucket fills in the Nile or canal; then allows the weight of the mud balance-weight to bring the bucket up again to the higher level to which it is proposed to raise the water, and empties its contents into the higher channel. The process is extremely laborious, as any one may prove in a few minutes to his own complete satisfaction; it is also slow and ineffectual, and takes away the best part of the labouring population from other work. Sometimes it needs as many as four *shadûfs*, one above the other, to raise the water by stages from the Nile at low level to the fields above; and the bank is

A SHADÛF.

crowded with figures toiling at these antediluvian machines in a burning sun from dawn to sunset. It is lamentable to see such waste of power and needless aggravation of suffering going on daily and yearly for lack of a little common sense and enterprise.

The *sâkiyas* are a decided improvement upon the *shadûfs*: they are wheels, cogged, as it were, with water jars, which fill below and empty above as the wheel goes round, worked by a yoke of buffaloes. They can be managed by a boy or woman, and are thus an inestimable saving of labour. But they cost about thirty pounds to set up, without reckoning the buffaloes and driver, and the initial cost is a serious matter in a country where co-operation is not understood and where local government loans are not yet introduced. Consequently, in the upper country, where people are poorer than in the Delta, and the land is on a higher level, the *shadûf* still holds its own, and the strength of the men is squandered in unnecessary and ineffectual labour.

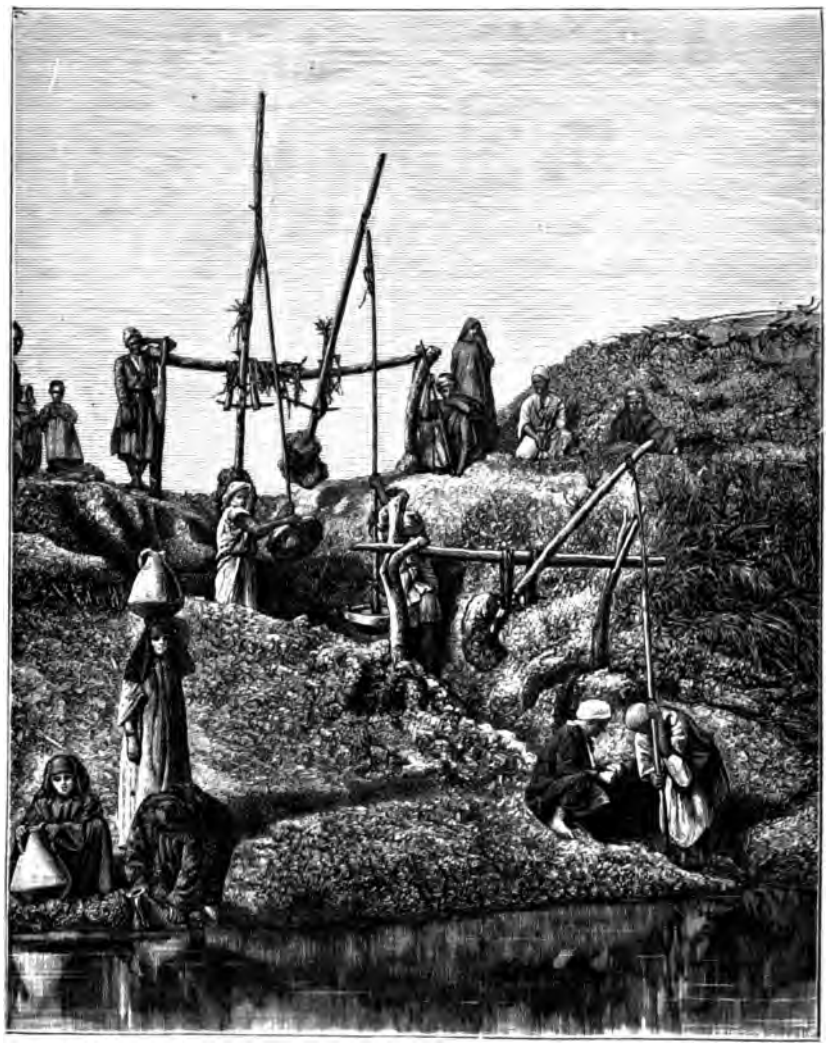
1.—With *shadûfs* it takes six men, toiling from dawn to sunset almost without intermission, to water two acres of barley or one of cotton or sugar-cane. As there is only one able-bodied man to three acres of cultivated land in Egypt, it is clear that *shadûfs* cannot irrigate the whole country.

2.—A *sâkiya*, worked by two or three yoke of buffaloes, will water thirteen acres of cereals, or five of cotton, or four of cane, working day and night, and managed by a couple of boys.

3.—A ten-horse-power steam-pump will water a hundred acres for the season.

The old system of land administration has been completely changed during the last six years of English influence in Egypt—ever since Lord Salisbury wisely gave Sir Evelyn Baring (whom we must now call Lord Cromer) and his able staff of English administrators the free hand and firm

support which had been denied them under Mr. Gladstone's



A CHAIN OF SHADÍFS.

meddlesome and vacillating government. *Corvée* labour has been entirely abolished. "In 1890, for the first time perhaps in all

history, there was no *corvée* in Egypt."* The Kurbâg (courbash) is no longer the tax-gatherers' weapon of persuasion; its use was prohibited by Lord Dufferin's influence in 1883, and is now unknown. Torture in every form has practically disappeared from Egypt. The conscription, which was formerly unjustly and oppressively conducted, is now equitable and almost popular. The land-tax, though still occasionally burdensome, has been reduced, and is levied when the harvest is gathered, instead of, as heretofore, when the crops were standing. The minor taxes have been reduced by about £200,000 a year, and cannot now be said to press upon the peasant. The fellâh knows exactly what he has to pay, and when he must pay it, and injustice and extortion are rapidly disappearing. Instead of borrowing in the reckless way of former years, the peasant is steadily paying off his old debts, and the village usurer's trade is happily ruined. The number of evictions for non-payment of rent is yearly diminishing. The system of irrigation has been entirely reformed by the untiring energy of Sir Colin Scott-Moncrieff, who has succeeded, after five years' work, in damming up the Nile by a double "barrage" below Cairo, in defiance of the evil augury of twenty years of vain attempts to accomplish this engineering feat, and who has renewed and developed the irrigation canals throughout the country. In 1891 alone 112 miles of canals were made or widened, and it may now be asserted with confidence that Egypt has been made practically independent of the accident of what is called a "low Nile." Instead of running away uselessly into the Mediterranean, the flood is dammed and stored for use on the fields. At all levels of the river, thanks to scientific engineering, there will always be enough water to irrigate the land, and the wasteful labour of pumps and buckets has been enormously reduced under the new system. Moreover, under European supervision, the water is justly and scientifically spread over the fields: each cultivator gets his due share, and bribes are no longer tolerated. The result of all this is that the land is

* Sir E. Baring's *Report, Egypt*, No. 3, 1891.

better cultivated and more productive; the rice and cotton crops in 1891-2 were phenomenal; and the land-tax, or rent, which amounts to five millions of money, and forms the chief source of revenue of the Egyptian government, is readily and regularly paid. The arrears used to be portentous, and £1,000,000 of them had to be remitted at the instance of the English adviser. The arrears for 1891 did not amount to £40,000, while in 1890 they were £90,000. Next year there will probably be no arrears at all. A considerable and increasing number of cultivators even display the extraordinary fiscal virtue of voluntarily paying their rent in advance.*

Another important service has been rendered to the peasantry in the making of roads. "Until recently it would have been impossible to have taken a cart-load of agricultural produce from any one centre of population to another in the Delta. Comparatively few of the canals were adapted for boats, and the one means of transporting cotton to the railway station or to the river was by camels, which, however well adapted for carrying burdens on the firm sand of the desert, are not suitable for the rich alluvial soil and wet fields of the Nile valley. All this is now being changed. A whole network of serviceable roads is being formed, sufficiently adapted for the dry climate of Egypt. The use of wheeled transport is becoming common."†

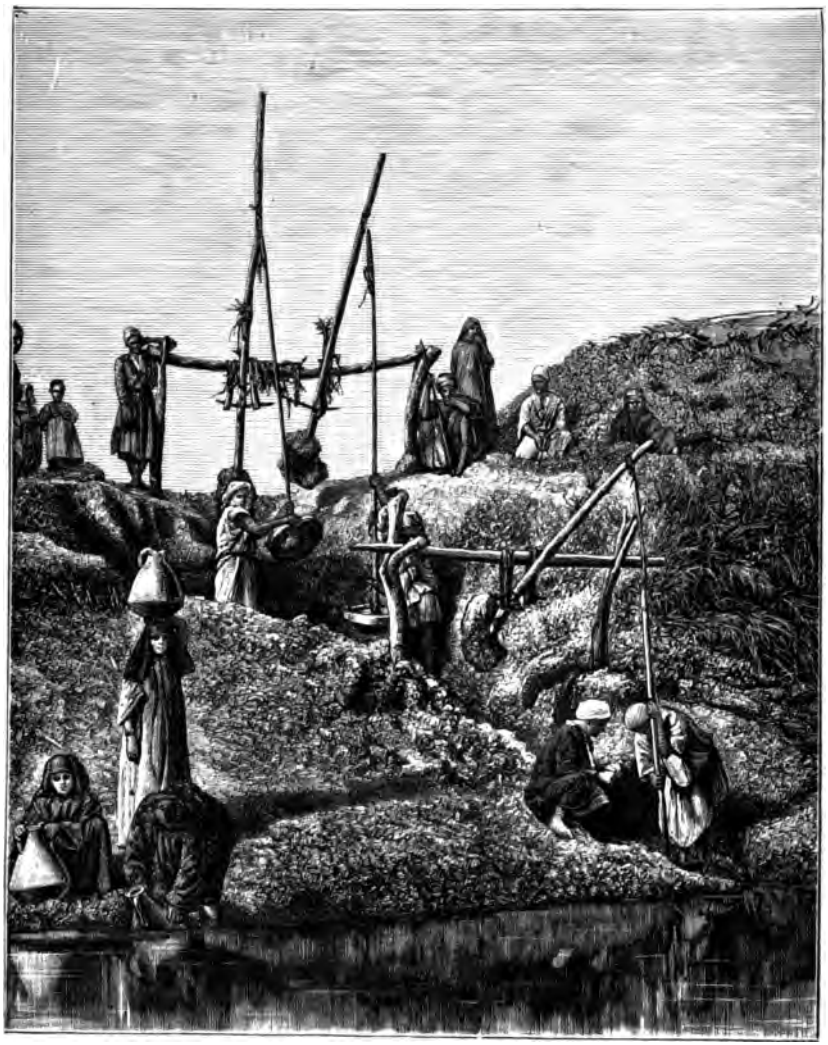
These are but a few of the improvements which have been introduced into the country by the beneficent influence of English officers, whom Indian experience has qualified in a peculiar degree for the difficult task they are gradually but successfully accomplishing. The contrast between the condition of the fellâhîn in 1882 and their present state is overwhelming testimony to the wisdom, tact, and energy of the able body of Englishmen in whose hands the administration of Egypt has by a happy destiny

* Sir E. Baring's *Report, Egypt*, No. 3, 1892.
† *Ibid.*, 1891.

fallen during the past decade. They were hungry and we gave them meat, thirsty and we gave them drink, naked and we clothed them—indirectly but not the less really. Even our superb administration of India is hardly a brighter jewel in our imperial crown than the marvellous regeneration of Egypt.

The agricultural population, whom we have raised from misery to happiness, may really be called "the people," for they form four-fifths of the inhabitants of Egypt. The townsfolk form an inconsiderable minority. Cairo and Alexandria may boast half-a-million of inhabitants between them, but the other great towns of the Delta—Damietta, Mansûra, Zakâzîk, Tanta, and Rosetta—do not muster more than twenty or thirty thousand apiece. In Upper Egypt there are really no large towns. Asyût, the upper capital, is a sort of magnified village; Aswân is hardly so big; and Luxor, Esnê, Minya, and the rest, would be called villages if there did not chance to be still smaller hamlets to appropriate the name. Egypt, in fact, consists of a large farm, dotted over with a number of villages, inhabited by an agricultural population. This agricultural population is known as the *fellâhîn*, whereof the singular is *fellâh*, and means literally a "cleaver" or "cutter" of the ground, and hence a peasant. No term could be less appropriate, for the soil requires scarcely any ploughing or turning. The fresh alluvial deposit each year needs no delving to make it fit for sowing. Deep subsoil ploughs would only turn up the worn-out earth beneath, and the least scratching of the surface is all that is needed preparatory to casting the seed. "Waterer" would be a better name than "cleaver" for the Egyptian peasant, since, under the old system, he was watering the ground from morning till night, except when he was forcibly compelled to mend canals for other people—a kind of watering still. But for this difficulty of irrigation and keeping up canals the Egyptian peasant would have an easy time of it. He has few of the anxieties of the English farmer. No dread of rain and rot affect him. The one thing that can make or mar his crops is the annual inundation: a "good Nile," *i.e.* a full flood, means plenty; a

support which had been denied them under Mr. Gladstone's



A CHAIN OF SHADÛFS.

meddlesome and vacillating government. *Corvée* labour has been entirely abolished. "In 1890, for the first time perhaps in all

no room for any mistake, no adaptation of crops to soils. All the land is good after a good Nile, and all the crops come up well. Sugar and cotton are of course different; but ordinary cereal and leguminous crops are easily cultivated at a great profit and with little labour.

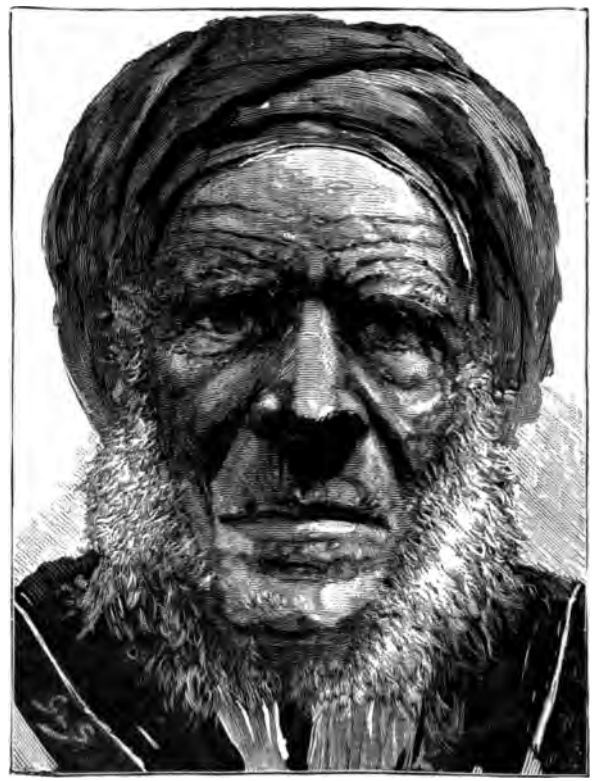
The countryman therefore has a certain amount of leisure in which to smoke and drink coffee, not to say raki, and chat with his friends. Ground down as he has been for thousands of years, the fellâh is yet neither sullen nor vindictive. Grievances he knows he has, but they do not prevent him being happy and merry; he will sing songs and crack jokes among his fellows, and laugh as the townsman seldom laughs. We cannot expect him to be very intelligent, when the one object of all his rulers, from Menes to Isma'îl, has been to treat him as a machine and to do his thinking for him. Yet he is no fool, and sometimes can see as far as most people. He is not, certainly, fit to govern himself—it may be doubted whether a purely rustic and agricultural people ever is—and "representative institutions" will happily remain a profound mystery to him for a good many lustres to come. He needs nursing and protecting (against himself as well as against his oppressors) like a child for many years, until the evil influences of bondage, the terror that breeds lies and deceit, the reckless despair, in face of oppression and injustice, that leads to borrowing and eviction and ruin, and the distrust of mankind that comes of centuries of

NILE BOATMAN.

tyrannical rulers, have had time to vanish from his nature. He has the making of a fine man in him. His physique is splendid; his temper is equable and happy; he is incapable of brutality—you never heard of a fellâh kicking his wife, though his treatment of animals might well be improved—and his brain is probably as capable of education as the brain of any other agricultural class. Freed from the burdens that oppress him, the fellâh should have a prosperous future before him, if our politicians at home do not try to force him on too fast.

An Egyptian village is a thing by itself. A causeway of earth, raised high enough to be above the reach of the inundation, conducts the traveller from the Nile to a greyish-brown mass, which is unlike anything he has seen in other lands. The huts form a complete wall round the village, with no opening save where the main entrance is, or where a room has fallen down, and, as usually happens, has not been repaired. The huts are built of bricks merely dried in the sun — the same material suffices for all secular buildings in Egypt, from the dwellings at Memphis downwards. If there were any continuous rain these bricks would turn into liquid mud, as is often seen in the Arabian desert on the road to Koseyr; but such a disaster never happens in Egypt proper by the action of rain, though it is not unusual to see houses gradually melting away in the inundation when they have not been built sufficiently high to escape the wash of the Nile. An Arab hut is at the best a temporary-looking erection. The walls are not straight or at right angles; every part looks fit to fall, and there is no attempt at either solidity or beauty. A few holes answer the purpose of windows. The roof consists of a

mat or bundle of *dura* stalks cemented with mud. One room of small dimensions accommodates an entire family, and a little yard outside affords room for the children, animals, and fowls to roll in the dirt and enjoy themselves to their utmost capacity. Indeed, the poorest huts are not even so fine as this, and resemble ancient



VILLAGE SHEYKH.

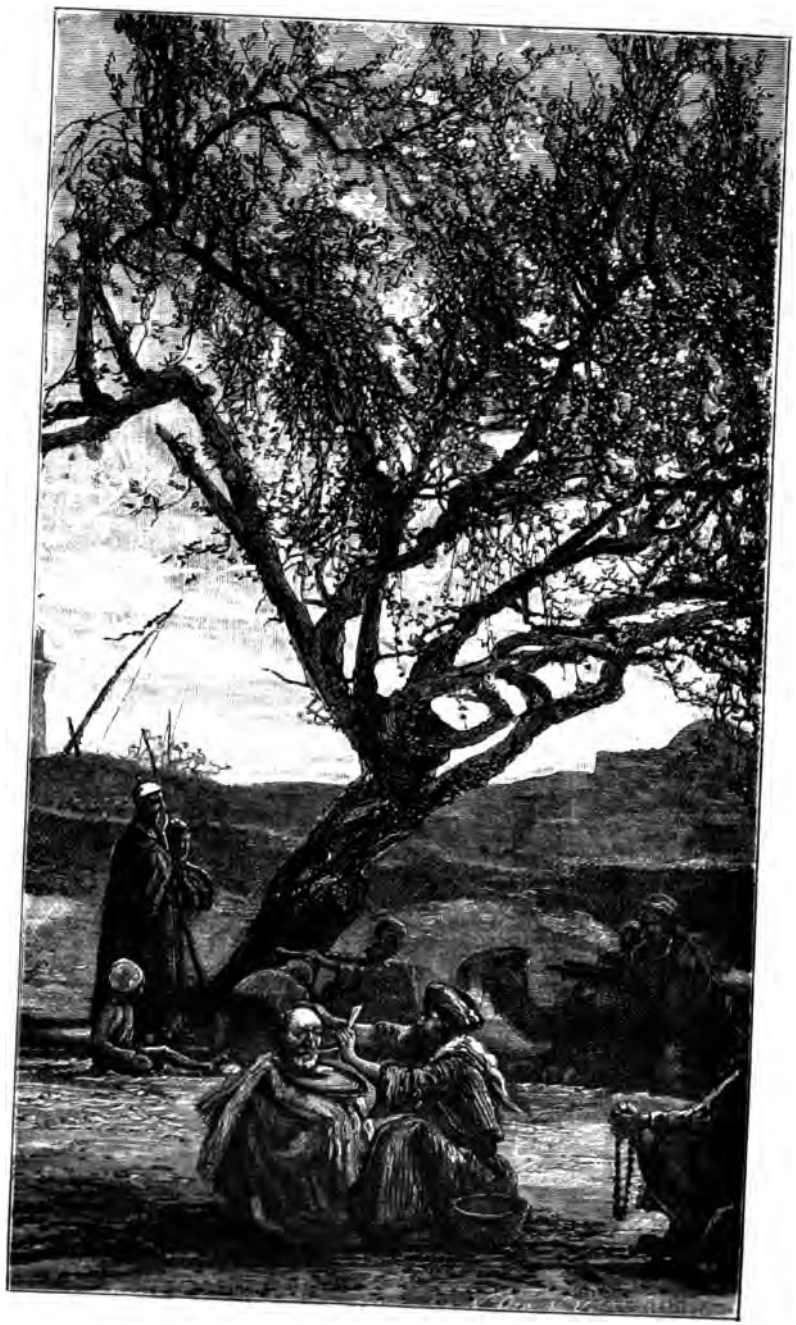
Celtic habitations more than anything else. In these, "the fellâh kneads for himself a hovel out of the clay left by the Nile in every hollow, mixed with some cut straw. A room is thus formed which may be entered by creeping through a hole. It is covered over with reeds, straw mats, and rags. Round it he then builds a

VILLAGE HUTS.

wall of clay about as high as a man, which encloses a yard. Cylindrical hollow spaces are let into the wall at intervals, and serve for keeping grain, for a pigeon-house, fowl-house, an oven, and a cupboard."* On the roof and walls prowl the village dogs, which are admirable guardians, but have not yet attained to the dignity of pets. In the midst of the huts a rude sort of chimney of whitewashed brick serves as a minaret to the primitive little mosque, and all around rise the curious conical towers, like ancient pylons of temples, crowned with battlements, perforated with holes, and bristling with twig-perches, where multitudinous flocks of pigeons find shelter after their daily assaults upon the corn and conflicts with the slingers who endeavour to protect the young crops from their ravages. The pigeons have their uses, but also their undoubted drawbacks. The houses or huts of an Egyptian village are all huddled together without plan or order; it

PIGEON TOWERS.

* C. B. Klunzinger: *Upper Egypt*, p. 121.



VILLAGE BARBERS.

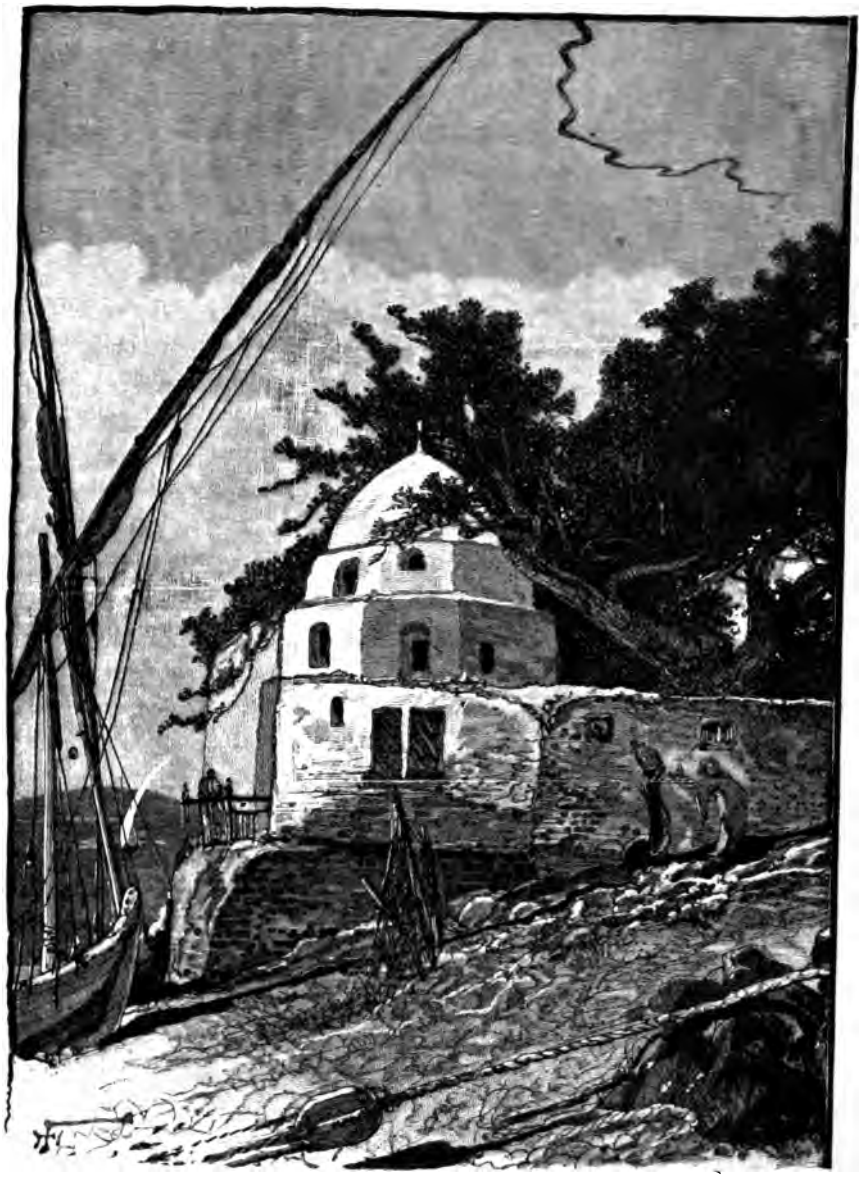
is next to impossible to discover by mere outside inspection where one tenement ends and the next begins. There is nothing like a street, except where the sheykh's house stands in a small open space, whither the elders resort to smoke their pipes and converse on the affairs of their little world. A rambling, ill-defined lane conducts to the other houses, and a broken-down wall or fallen hovel often supplies the best mode of egress to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. Outside the hut-constructed rampart which shuts off the outer world is the ditch, the village drain, a place of horrible smells and sights, where, however, the dogs and children delight to play, heedless of the swarms of flies that settle upon their eyes and mouth. When one sees the normal fly-spotted countenances of the Egyptian children, it is impossible to be surprised at the enormous proportion of blind or one-eyed adults. Ophthalmia arises in various ways, but it is undoubtedly propagated by flies, and to the carelessness and prejudices of mothers and the dirtiness of infants must be ascribed a good deal of its prevalence. The women think it is unlucky to wash a baby's face, and prefer to let him go blind all his life rather than remove the pestilential flies that cover his eyes like a patch of court-plaister.

In the neighbourhood of every village there is a well, shaded by a clump of palm-trees. Here the men often collect for gossip, and hither the women come to fetch water, their tall, upright, well-formed figures moving gracefully under the weight of the large pitchers they carry on their heads. Not far off will be found the tomb of a local saint, where the piety of the villagers maintain ever-burning lamps, and whither those in trouble or sickness resort for the miraculous virtues which defunct Mohammedan saints, like those of other churches, are believed to possess. "More things are wrought by faith" in Egypt, as in more western countries, than most men fancy; and people may become cured, in imagination, almost as easily as they can get ill, in

imagination. There is hardly a village in Egypt which has not wonderful tales to tell of the magical cures wrought by its saint, and the most unblushing liars can be made to speak the truth if their hands are laid on a holy man's grave. The Egyptians have an extraordinary reverence for their saints, who are frequently harmless lunatics, but more often ingenious impostors. Some of them go about stark naked, with unkempt beard and flowing locks, eat chopped straw and broken glass, or dress themselves fantastically in parti-coloured raiment, and play ridiculous antics in the public streets. When one of these scoundrels meets you in the road and asks alms, you are bound to give, unless you choose to risk the probable misfortunes that, according to popular superstition, will follow your refusal. Sometimes a burly saint, armed as usual with a long heavy staff, becomes violent, and it has chanced to more than one traveller to spend an unpleasant quarter of an hour holding on to the sharpened point of the *nebbût* with which a holy brawny man was prodding him. It is not, however, till he is dead that the saint becomes truly great; he is respected while living, but almost worshipped when defunct, and his life and miracles then receive the marvellous embellishments which Muslims love to bestow upon their martyrs and confessors. There is a certain family likeness amongst most Mohammedan saints which is a little discouraging to those who would fain believe. The holy men

COMING FROM THE WELL.

show a lamentable poverty of invention, and content themselves too often with the well-worn performances of their predecessors. They are fond of making their *début* in a sheen of soft white light, suffusing an odour of musk. In the course of a long life spent in solitary meditation, at the expense of the neighbourhood, they contrive to impose a couple of tolerable miracles upon the simple folk on whom they trade, and then dying, very much like other people, they expect their *kubbas*, or tombs, to be visited by generations of pious worshippers who are in need of blessings, spiritual or temporal—paradise, children, or rich crops—and are prepared to pay for them. And the wonderful thing is that these lame and stale impositions really succeed. The country people, credulous like all rustics, flock to the grave of the saint, over which is erected a simple whitewashed dome; and calling down blessings on his head, perform the circuit of the primitive wooden railing which encloses the grave, muttering prayers or portions of the Korân, and benedictions on the Prophet and all holy men, ending with "O God, I conjure thee by the Prophet and by him to whom this place is dedicated, to grant me such and such blessings," or "My burden be on God and on thee, O thou to whom this place is sacred." They kiss the railing and the walls and threshold, distribute water and bread and money to the poor for the saint's sake, sacrifice a calf at a tomb in return for answering prayers, place flowers and myrtle and palm-leaves on the grave. Ostrich eggs, lamps, and relics, gorgeous canopies and embroidered cloth hangings, quaint bird's-eye views of Jerusalem and Mekka, testify to the zeal and devotion of the neighbours. To be guardian of a saint's tomb is no honorary post, for the poor women of the neighbourhood frequently come with little offerings of bread or money, by which they hope to secure the saint's intercession and favour, and we may be sure the keeper of the tomb does not always forward their votive gifts to paradise. The strangest feature of this hagiolatry, however, is the superstition of the Christians of Egypt, who are so greedy of blessings that they will try to obtain them by fair means or foul,



TOMB OF A SAINT AT MINYA.

and will often visit a Muslim saint's tomb, and kiss it, and leave money on it, in the belief that such conciliatory conduct will redound to their advantage in this world and the next. Indeed, Christian and Mohammedan saints have many things in common; sometimes we trace an episode from the *Legenda Aurea* in the narratives of the *Acta Sanctorum Islamismi*, and it is impossible to say how much of the veracious histories of Giacomo Voraggio might have been borrowed from a Mohammedan source.

A country town is little more than a big village, with a few good buildings and a mosque or two; and there are not many such towns with any air of prosperity. The best are on the western bank of the Nile, and of these the three principal are Minya, Asyût, and Girga. The first is "like a town dropped unexpectedly into the midst of a ploughed field, the streets being mere trodden lanes of mud and dust, and the houses a succession of windowless prisons with their backs to the thoroughfare. The bazar, which consists of two or three lanes a little wider than the rest, is roofed over here and there with rotting palm-rafters and bits of tattered matting, while the market is held in a space of waste ground outside the town. The former, with its cupboard-like shops, in which the merchants sit cross-legged like shabby old idols in shabby old shrines,—the ill-furnished shelves,—the familiar Manchester goods,—the gaudy native stuffs,—the old red saddles and faded rugs hanging up for sale,—the smart Greek stores where Bass's ale, claret, curaçoa, Cyprus, Vermouth, cheese, pickles, sardines, Worcester sauce, blacking, biscuits, preserved meats, candles, cigars, matches, sugar, salt, stationery, fireworks, jams, and patent medicines can all be bought at one fell swoop,—the native cook-shops, exhaling savoury perfumes of *kebâbs* and lentil-soup, and presided over by an Abyssinian Soyer blacker than the blackest historical personage ever was painted,—the surging, elbowing, clamorous crowd,—the donkeys, the camels, the street-criers, the chatter, the dust, the flies, the fleas, and the dogs, all put us in mind of the poorer quarters of Cairo. In the market, it is even worse. Here are hundreds of country folk sitting on the

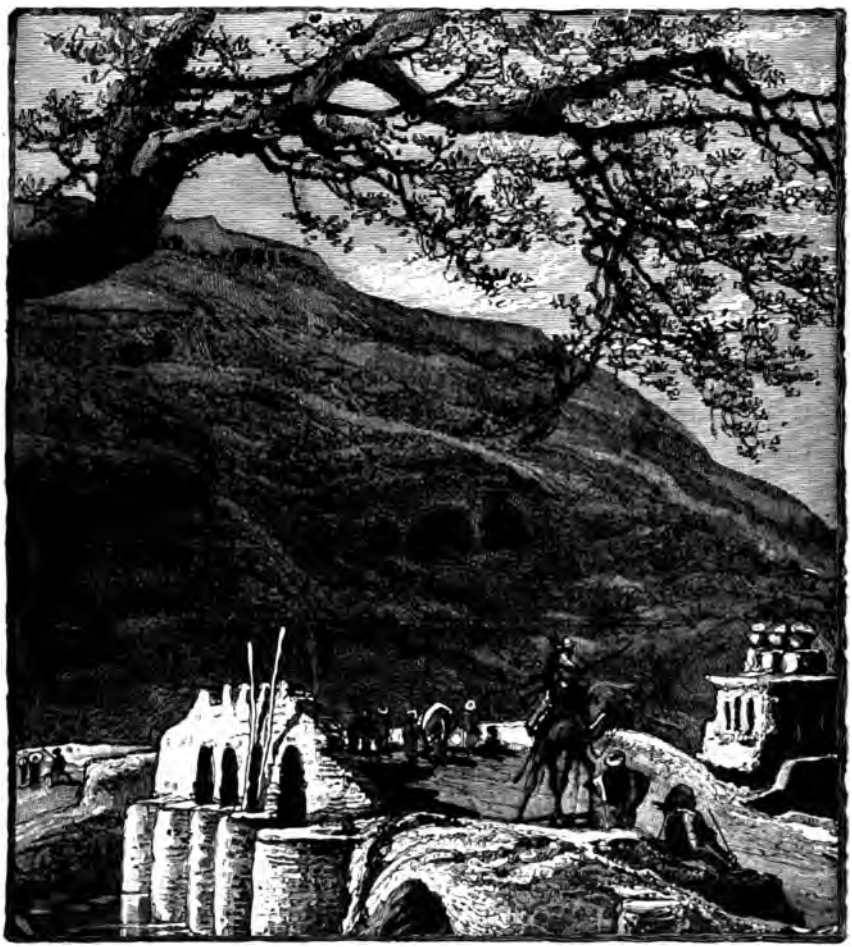
GATEWAY OF ASYÛT.

ground behind their baskets of fruit and vegetables. Some have eggs, butter, and buffalo-cream for sale, while others sell sugar-canes, limes, cabbages, tobacco, barley, dried lentils, split beans, maize, wheat, and durah. The women go to and fro with bouquets of live poultry. The chickens scream; the sellers rave; the buyers bargain at the top of their voices; the dust flies in clouds, the sun pours down floods of light and heat; you can scarcely hear yourself speak; and the crowd is as dense as that other crowd which at this very moment, on this very Christmas Eve, is circulating among the alleys of Leadenhall Market."*

Asyût (or Siout) is a much larger place, and gloriously situated. The approach along the zigzags of the river is singularly beautiful, as the town appears first on one side and then on the other, with the glowing Libyan hills behind it and delicious riverside pictures in the foreground. Asyût is the capital of Upper Egypt, and musters a population of twenty-five thousand; and its superior rank and prosperity are testified by the comparative solidity and regularity of its mud huts, and the several well-built houses and mosques which it contains. It is famous for its manufactures of pottery and pipe bowls, and caravans arrive here with the produce of the equatorial provinces. But the finest thing about it is its situation. Half-girdled by a spur of the Libyan hills behind, it looks down upon the broad windings of the river, while around it stretches the rich green plain watered by the long canal which irrigates the valley as far as the Fayyûm, its high embankments planted with trees. No site is more picturesque in all Egypt. A raised causeway leads to Asyût from El-Hamrâ, a little port on the Nile, and another leads from Asyût to the tombs in the Libyan mountains. Tier above tier, in the lofty stratified cliffs, yawn the tombs, while shreds and bones of mummies bleach in the sun on the slopes below.

* A. B. Edwards, *One Thousand Miles up the Nile*, ch. v.

Interesting as many of these tombs are, the view from the mountain in which they are cut is even more fascinating. "Seen from the great doorway of the second grotto, it looks like a framed



BRIDGE AND ROCK-TOMBS AT ASYÛT.

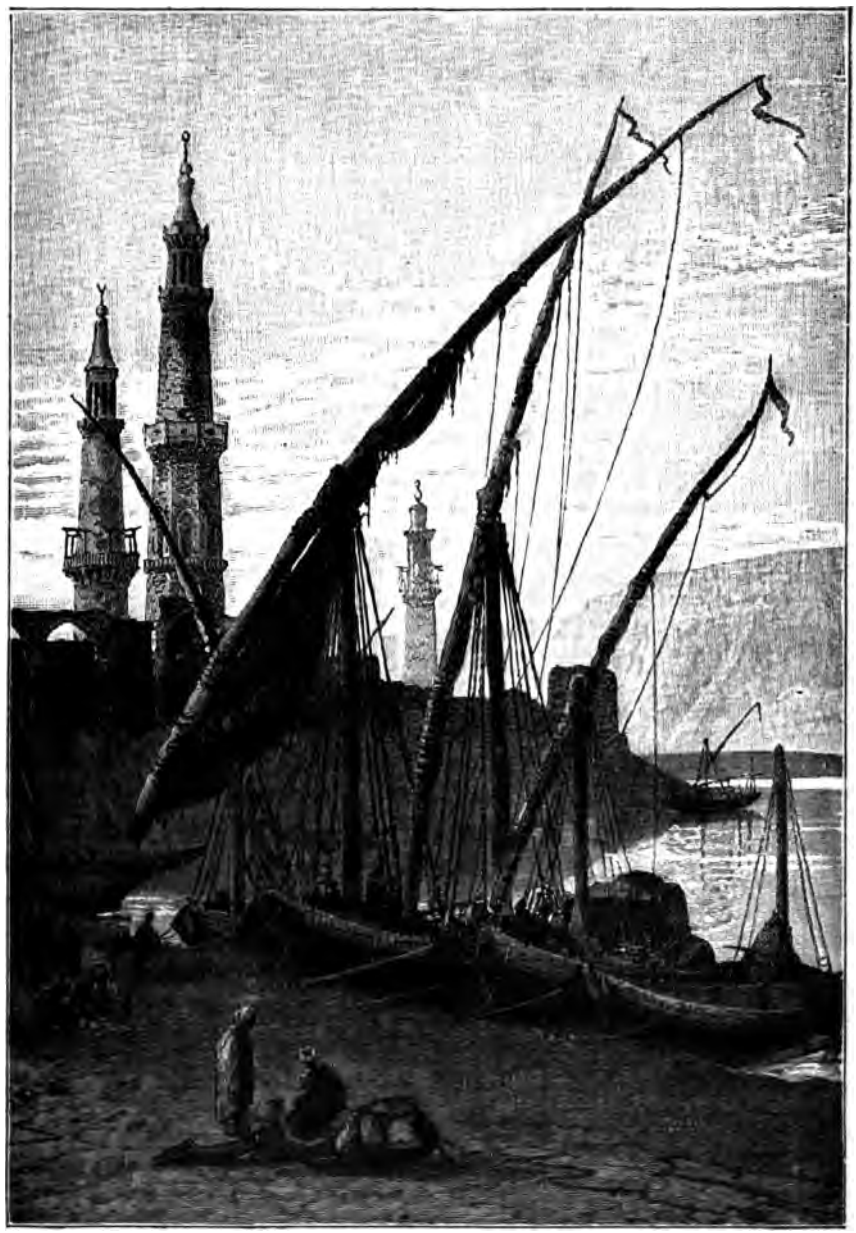
picture. For the foreground, we have the dazzling slope of limestone débris; in the middle distance, a wide plain clothed with the delicious tender green of very young corn; further away yet,

the cupolas and minarets of Siout rising from the midst of a belt of palm-groves; beyond these again, the molten gold of the great river glittering away, coil after coil, into the far distance; and all along the horizon, the everlasting boundary of the desert. Large pools of placid water left by the last inundation lie here and there, lakes amid the green. A group of brown men are wading yonder with their nets. A funeral comes along the embanked road—the bier carried at a rapid pace on men's shoulders, and covered with a red shawl; the women taking up handfuls of dust and scattering it upon their heads as they walk. We can see the dust flying, and hear the shrill wail of the mourners borne upon the breathless air. The cemetery towards which they are going lies round to the left, at the foot of the mountain—a wilderness of little white cupolas with here and there a tree. Broad spaces of shade sleep under the spreading sycamores by the roadside; a hawk circles overhead; and Siout, bathed in the splendour of the morning sun, looks as fairy-like as ever." *

These tombs, and many others in various parts of Egypt, were appropriated by anchorites of the Christian Church; and there is a yet more sacred association with them, if we like to believe the legend that makes Asyût, or Lycopolis as the Greeks called it, the place where the Holy Family sojourned during their exile in Egypt. Similar traditions are unfortunately too common to meet with general acceptance; and in this case the likelihood is further weakened by the improbability that the Holy Family, if they had once settled in Asyût, would ever have deserted it.

Another large town was Girga, a Christian settlement named after St. George, now fallen into decay, but still a beautiful spot, faced by a noble cliff in the Arabian hills. Like Asyût, it has its monumental background, but much further away and infinitely more important; for twelve miles west of the town of St. George lie the ruins of Abydos, the site of primeval This, and the burial-place of Osiris. Traversing a lovely grove of palms, we emerge upon the most fertile tract in Egypt. For six miles we ride

* A. B. Edwards, *One Thousand Miles up the Nile*, ch. vi.



THE MOORING-PLACE AT GIRGA.

through waving barley, wheat, and bean fields; far as the sight can reach on either side stretches the wide expanse of green. Slingers are standing here and there, armed with their fibre slings, to guard the precious grain from the birds that hover above. A long string of camels winds slowly along the narrow footpaths that intersect the cornfields, and a grey-bearded Arab of the outlying village jogs into town upon his ass. This granary of Egypt is one of the most perfect sights in the land. Visiting Abydos, as the traveller generally does, on the return voyage, the vivid green of this six miles' ride offers a refreshing, restful contrast to the eye which has been blinking for weeks at burning yellow sand and limestone; and to him who has seen the Holy Island where Osiris is fabled to sleep, the home of the older legend which tells how the head of the god was buried at Abydos is doubly interesting. Historically, however, Abydos should be the first monumental sight visited after Memphis and the Pyramids. Indeed, the oldest city of Egypt, This or Thinis, once stood here, whence Menes, the first of the long line of Egyptian kings, migrated to found Memphis. Crude brick remains are all that can now be seen of Thinis; and Abydos, its successor, belongs to post-Memphite times, and forms a fitting prelude to the study of Thebes. The seven aisles ending in seven pictured chapels are unique in Egyptian architecture, and the beauty is increased by the remarkable preservation of the whole temple—roof, walls, and pillars—and by the unrivalled charm of the sculptures which cover the walls and columns. Not only are they in an unusually fine state of preservation, but they are evidently the work of a supreme artist. Unless it be the sculptures in the tombs at Sakkara, there is nothing in Egyptian glyptic art at all comparable with the wall-chiselling at Abydos. The famous figure of Seti offering a little statue of the goddess Truth to the seated Osiris, on the north wall of the inner court, is matchless, and its pure white surface enhances its beauty to a Western eye, unacclimatised to the Egyptian method of colouring sculpture. The Theban artists could not rival Hi (for we know the name of Seti's sculptor), and

THE DÔM PALM.

even the portions of Seti's temple which Rameses II. completed show a marked falling off in artistic feeling.

Near by is a mound now called Kôm Es-Sultân, where it is pretended the head of Osiris is buried. The mound is formed of the accretions of centuries of pious Egyptians who were buried near the sepulchre of the best-beloved of their gods. His tomb has not yet been found, but some commemorative monument may eventually be discovered. Every one knows how Osiris came to be buried there; how he ruled the world wisely and gave just judgments until his false brother Typhon enticed him into a chest and cast him into the Nile; how Isis, his queen, searched the wide earth for her husband's body, and at last found it buried at Byblon in Syria, where it had been cast up by the sea; how Typhon again possessed himself of the corpse and cut it into fourteen pieces and scattered them over the land of Egypt; and how the mourning wife sought diligently for the severed limbs, and buried each where it lay, and the head was buried at Abydos. Then Osiris, who now ruled the world of shades, made armour for Horus, his son, and sent him out to do battle with Typhon, who was vanquished but not slain outright. And Osiris came back to reign with Isis. How the setting and reappearance of the sun is figured in this beautiful myth, and how the conflict between Osiris and Typhon was made to symbolise the struggle between spiritual and intellectual as well as physical light and darkness, the fight between right and wrong, between life and death, till the resurrection of Osiris became the type and symbol of the immortality of the soul, is known to all. To every pious Egyptian the story of the risen Osiris was a presage of his own resurrection, and though, like the god, his body must be buried in the sand of the Western desert, like him too shall he rise again and triumph over death. We see this idea in the representation of the myth in many temples from Abydos to Philae; and separate chapels were set apart for this special subject; and these "Mammisi" form a special feature in all Ptolemaic temples, such as Dendara, Edfû, and Philae, when the imaginative Greek

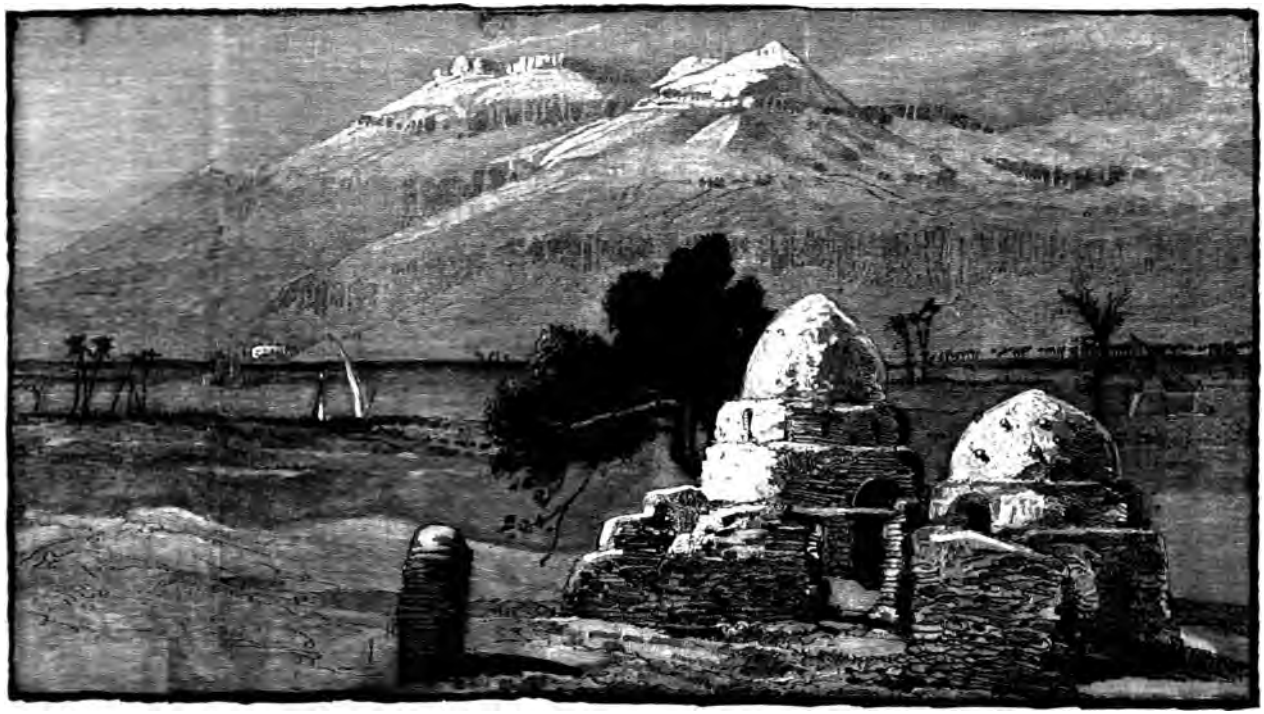
had adopted the myth of Osiris and Isis and sublimated its significance.

We have spoken of the noble prospect which opens out before the rocky rampart of Asyût; but there was once another city on the sacred river which stood right royally. In all the long course of the Nile there is no site that can compare with that of Thebes. Nile scenery possesses a strange beauty of its own, but it is a monotonous unchanging beauty. Long lines of brown banks, a strip of vivid green behind them, narrow or wide according to the breadth of the valley and the facilities for irrigation, and beyond, closing in the view, a low barrier of yellow-brown hills—these are the only features of Egyptian scenery that meet the traveller's eye for mile after mile of his Nile voyage. Here and there a village, with its clump of palms, its shapeless mud huts and queer-looking pigeon towers, its sheykh's house and the little white-washed dome which marks the tomb of a local celebrity, breaks the monotony; and at wider intervals a veritable town, with a few fairly-built houses and a couple of minarets, to show that, whatever it may appear, it is not merely a village like the rest, makes an agreeable diversion. But, as a rule, brown river, brown banks, and pale brown hills constitute the Egyptian triad in the unemotional tourist's recollection.

Thebes upsets all such generalisations. It is not in the least like the rest of the Nile scenery. The Libyan hills, which have hitherto kept away at some distance from the river, low and dim, and rather like the South Downs of Sussex without their grass, draw close to the bank at Dendara, just before Thebes is reached, and then suddenly sweep away again in a noble curve, rising at the same time to the exceptional height of over twelve hundred feet. The Arabian hills, on the eastern side, which have hugged the bank most of the way from Cairo, seem here to have taken the hint from their Libyan rivals; for they too trend away from the Nile, only to return and almost meet their antagonists as they bend round again to the river and close in upon the view just above Thebes. Thus by corresponding curves the mountains

open out a great amphitheatre, such as a king would choose to build his capital therein. Instead of a strip of vegetation, a broad green plain now borders the Nile on either hand, rich with bean-fields and clover and all manner of corn; and beyond the sandy slope that edges the plain there rises no longer the low undulating ridge which merely marks the limit of the desert plateau, but a stern barrier of precipices, scored with ancient torrent beds and honeycombed with the tombs of the mighty dead. No one who has ever seen it can forget the first sight of this plain from the heights of the Libyan hills. Our earliest impression of Thebes should, in prudence, be taken from here. Instead of watching the boat's gradual approach, the appearance bit by bit of a pylon here and an obelisk there, and losing the general effect by the slow appreciation of details, as almost all travellers are compelled to do, we should arrive at Luxor by night, cross the river blindfold early in the morning, and never open our eyes till we are safe in the gorge which traverses the Libyan range and nothing but yellow rock is to be seen. After threading the "Valley of the Kings"—a bare rugged ravine scooped in the rock by an extinct torrent, where the baked cliffs reflect the blazing noonday sun till the

MOONLIGHT ON THE NILE.



THE PLAIN OF THEBES FROM NEAR KARNAK.

gorge seems red-hot—and then clambering over the crest of the hill that divides the valley from the plain, the view of Thebes comes upon us as a delicious shock. Below our feet the mountains seem to overhang the plain; their threatening cliffs girdle it like the outspread arms of a giant; while opposite, the Arabian rampart, accepting the challenge like a jealous rival, stretches out its answering embrace, and raises its three peaks in vain attempt to measure itself against its towering adversary. And in the midst, the beautiful fertile plain seems, woman-like, to enjoy this strife for her possession, and, cool in the waters of her father Nile, to smile serenely through the sunlight at the hot endeavours of her emulous suitors.

Nothing more lovely than this green amphitheatre, with its border of yellow sand and rampart of cliffs, can be seen in all the land of Egypt. As we descend by the steep path that leads to the terraced temple of Deyr El-Bahry—which Queen Hatasu, sister of Thothmes and earliest of the great queens of history, built as an antechamber to her tomb—and look across the plain and over the river to the lofty obelisk, tallest in Egypt, which she set up in the court of her father's temple at Karnak, new and wonderful points of view are reached at every step. We approach the level of the plain, and wander past the Assasîf to the long colonnade which shows how great a temple the Ramesêum has once been; and with Kurna on our left and Medînet Habû on our right, ride back through the scented bean-fields, where the twin colossi, the "Vocal Memnon" and his brother, like two weird sentinels, keep guard over the glory that is departed and the house that is left desolate—till we reach the Nile again, with the temples and minarets of Luxor rising opposite in picturesque confusion. Well might a Hebrew poet say that no city was "better than the city of Amon, that was enthroned among the streams, that had the waters round about her, whose rampart was the Nile and her wall the river-sea."*

The natural beauty of Thebes is not, however, in the eyes of

*Nahum iii. 8.

THE STATUE OF MEMNON AT THEBES.

most people, its chief title to admiration. Its girdle of hills encloses not only one of Nature's masterpieces, but some of the most marvellous achievements of human genius, skill, and perseverance. There are more than twenty temples at Thebes—as many, that is to say, as all the rest of the surviving temples of Egypt put together—and in variety of design, grandeur of scale, and richness of decoration, and also, unhappily, in the ruthlessness of their ruin, they have no rivals. Many will prefer, for perfection of plan and comparative preservation, such exquisite examples of Ptolemaic art as the temples of Edfû and Dendara; the design and the matchless sculptures of Abydos enthral the admiration of others; while, for a bold and captivating realism in the wall-paintings, combined with an almost incredible massiveness in the masonry, the buildings of the Memphite empire stand without peer. But Thebes has something of all these, and something more. It has the massiveness of Memphis applied to columns and roofs and colossi, instead of square blocks of stone; it has graphic wall-sculptures, less natural and vivid, no doubt, than Sakkara, and without the extraordinary, almost Greek, purity of Abydos, but still vigorous and artistic, and representing, moreover, not merely a man's domestic life and country pursuits, but the victories of the greatest kings of antiquity and the erection of the most magnificent of ancient monuments—the works and wars of conquerors instead of the sports and business of country magnates. And all this is found at Thebes in such abundance and variety, on such an immense scale, in such endless forms and repetitions, that the mind fails to grasp the outline in the lavishness of detail, and, appalled at the number and vastness of the fragments of Thebes, abandons the thought of analysis or comparison, and by acclamation accepts "No Amon, enthroned among the streams," as, after Memphis, the chief of the monumental sites of Egypt.

Yet what we now see of Thebes, the monster ruins that cover so immense a space, represent but a fraction of what Thebes once has been. Even of the temples, not one is even nearly entire. Karnak is a heap of ruins, fallen columns, broken obelisks, walls

MOORED ON THE NILE.

and roofs thrown down; Luxor is half buried and in part destroyed; Kurna is in terrible decay; the greater part of the Ramesêum has disappeared; the temple of Amenoph has entirely vanished, except its two colossal sentinels; Medînet Habû has suffered partial martyrdom at the hands of the Copts, who built a village over it; and how many other temples, of which we know nothing, have gone without a trace? But besides this demolition and decay, where is Thebes itself, the city "of the hundred gates," of which Homer sang?—

οὐδ' ὅσα Θήβας
Αἰγυπτίας, ὅθι πλεῖστα δόμοις ἐν κτήματα κεῖται,
αἳθ' ἑκατόμπυλοί εἰσι, διηκόσιοι δ' ἀν' ἑκάστην
ἀνέρες ἐξοιχνεῦσι σὺν ἵπποισιν καὶ ὄχεσφιν.*

Here are some of its temples, whose pylons doubtless formed the "hundred gates," but the city itself seems to have been swallowed up by the earth. Of all this great metropolis, which once could send out twenty thousand armed chariots, and whose κτήματα furnished indeed a mighty spoil to the Persian Cambyses—of the capital of the victorious Amenoph, Thothmes, and Rameses, absolutely nothing remains—not a trace of a wall—hardly even a mound of rubbish! Like Memphis, Thebes itself has vanished utterly from the face of the earth. Like Memphis, also, Thebes has left behind monuments of its religion which three and four thousand years of neglect and wilful destruction, and finally the ravages of indiscriminating admiration, have not availed to destroy.

The city of Thebes has vanished because it was not built to endure. The ancient Egpptians laid no store by their dwelling-houses; they regarded life only as a halting-place on the journey to the next world, and their abode here was too transitory to be worth elaboration. They spent all their skill and ingenuity in constructing dwelling-places for their dead selves, where the *Ka* or "double" of their soul would agreeably pass his time in contemplation of the scenes of his past life which he would find

* *Il.* ix. 381—384.

depicted on the walls of the tomb. All the records we possess of the old Memphite empire are in tombs. The pyramids are tombs; the pictures at Sakkara are on the walls of the ante-chambers of tombs; the sculptures of Meydûm are sepulchral monuments. Even of the second great period of Egyptian history, that represented mainly by the Twelfth Dynasty, our chief information is derived from the tombs of Beny Hasan. It is there that we see Egyptian society, as it was twenty-five centuries before Christ, depicted on the walls of a family burying-place. And at Thebes the same principle holds good. The monuments that survive are those that were built not for this life but for eternity. The palaces of Rameses—Shelley's "Ozymandias"—have vanished, but the monuments he built for his soul's welfare bear testimony to his power in every degree of latitude from the Mediterranean to the second cataract.

> Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown
> And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
> Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
> Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
> The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:
> And on the pedestal these words appear:—
> "My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:
> Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!"

But we must leave Ancient Egypt to other pens, and come back to the country towns of the present day. Among the most conspicuous buildings of any fair-sized town is the local law court. Passing through a yard shaded with old sycamore-trees, we enter a room full of Coptic scribes—an exclusive guild, who act as clerks in all the governors' and minor courts. The Coptic clerk is, indeed, practically the judge of first instance, for it depends upon his favour whether the peasant's suit ever reaches the governor's or judge's ears at all, and this favour is—or used to be—only won by hard cash, so that unless the peasant had enough money about him to bribe the Coptic intermediary he never gained an audience of the judge himself. Perhaps it makes little difference, for this

legal magnate, who sits smoking his pipe on a divan in the next room, entertains very similar notions to those of his Coptic clerk as to the evidential value of bakhshîsh and the salutary effects of a sound bastinading impartially administered to the soles of both accuser and accused, plaintiff and defendant. The only plan is to "square" the scribe, and thus you obtain, not necessarily justice, but your suit. At least, this was the invariable course of procedure until the last few years. Under Sir Evelyn Baring's rule, corruption has greatly diminished, but it is so deeply engrained in the national character that its suppression entirely depends upon constant and vigilant inspection by keen-eyed Englishmen. The Coptic clerk especially needs looking after.

These scribes are found in every town. The black turban and *kaftân* would always distinguish them, but a glance at their faces is generally enough. It is difficult to say exactly in what they differ in appearance from Mohammedans, but one is seldom wrong in identifying them. They constitute the lower official class, and are decidedly more corrupt and voracious than the Turkish governors themselves. There is an exceedingly good understanding established between the two orders of thieves; so far resembling that which exists between a local justice of the peace and the clerk to the justices, that it is really the clerk who knows and administers the law while the great man takes the credit of it. Probably any other official class in Egypt would prove as venal as the Coptic scribes—indeed the experiment has been tried with native Muslims without improving matters—but there can be no doubt that so long as our friend Girges or Hanna holds the clerkly inkstand and portfolio there will be no justice in the land if he can hinder it. The fraternity have hitherto resisted all attempts at reform, extension, or dissolution. The Copt dresses like the Muslim, but prefers sombre colours; like the Muslim he abjures swine's flesh, and adds camel's flesh to the prohibition; unlike the Muslim, however, he atones for his frequent abstinences by immense potations of date-spirit, whereby he waxes corpulent, in spite of the vegetable regimen on which he is forced to subsist

during the months of abstinence ordained by his Church. Unlike the Muslim, too, he marries but one wife, and he marries her with quite different ceremonies from those of his Mohammedan neighbours.*

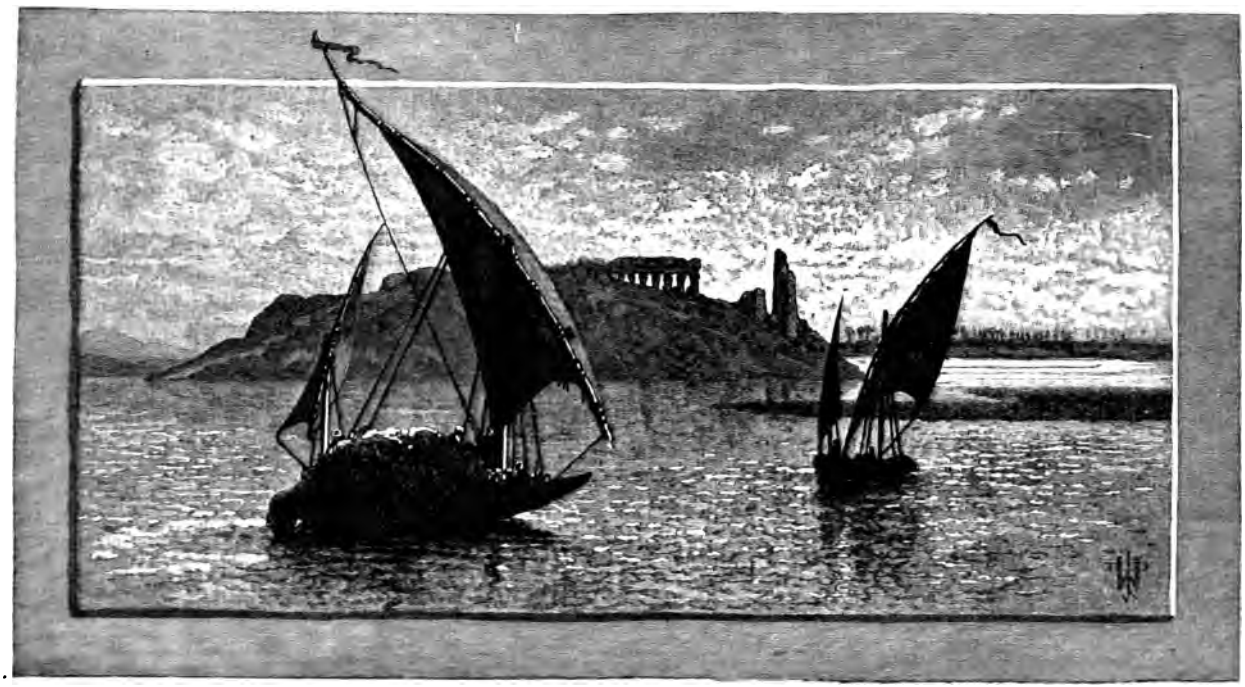
The monotonous life of the common people is very much the same as that of the Cairene, only still more inactive and deliberate. The fellâh, indeed, works hard at the *shadûf*, but he can hardly be said to overwork himself. The inhabitant of a country town, however, does scarcely any work at all. There are but few trades to employ him; most articles requiring skill in their manufacture are imported, and the few industries that remain do not engage many workers or much of their time. Tanning, dyeing, rude carpentry and turnery, using bow-drills, in which the toes take their share, weaving, tinkering, and pottery may be seen in operation in the Egyptian country town, and the last is perhaps the most attractive to the tourist, who never fails to purchase large crates full of the pipe-bowls, censers, ash-trays, candlesticks, and other red and black pottery made at Asyût. The *gullas* and large water vessels made at Kinê and Ballâsa are also famous, and the indigo-dyed cloths of Esnê form the characteristic material

ASYÛT POTTERY.

* See the late Laurence Oliphant's *Land of Khemi*, a book wherein is much profit and no little humour.

of the peasants' dress in Lower and Middle Egypt. But nobody seems to fatigue himself in any of these industries. The artisan does as much as he feels inclined to do, and then enjoys a placid doze. He is an early riser, partly because he is expected to say the daybreak prayers, and partly because it is considered unhealthy to sleep under the risen sun. But he atones for this matutinal energy by a comfortable soothing pipe in the neighbouring coffee-house, and eats a simple breakfast of bread and beans and milk. Then he sets about his business, whatever it may be, but always in a graceful, indolent manner, which does not allow room for such an idea as urgency. If you attempt to hurry him he has his ready answer, "*Bukra*—to-morrow, an' it please God." In the mid-day he sleeps, after a frugal dinner of bread and fruit, and does not begin moving again until the afternoon is well advanced, when he bestirs himself, says his prayers, drinks his coffee, smokes his pipe, and makes some show of activity. "With the last rays of the setting sun the call from the minaret is again heard, the trader shuts his shop, the workman flings by his tool, the scholar, the writer, the man of learning shut their books. After his evening devotions the dweller in the town moves slowly homeward to his house, where his supper is already awaiting him. At this meal, which is generally the principal meal of the day, he quite acts the gourmand. His wife brings it to him on a round wooden board, elevated on pieces of wood or short feet. The basis of the meal is bread made

ASYÛT POTTERY.



KÔM OMBO FROM THE RIVER.

of wheat or millet flour, or hot unleavened cakes—of which he devours incredible quantities—baked over a fire of dung. His wife has also boiled or fried for him a fish with onions and oil, or there lies in the pot a young pigeon or a fowl, the juice of which tastes excellently when the cakes are dipped in it. Sometimes also a small piece of mutton, buffalo, camel, or goat flesh has been procured, with which the soaked *baniyas*, or the viscous-juiced, spinach-like *muluchiya*, are cooked. These, however, are the more expensive viands; and in the evening also people, on ordinary occasions, are satisfied with the *fûl* (or broad beans) which has become so much a national dish. Whenever it is possible, two or three kinds of dishes must be on the table, and the inhabitant of the town tastes of them indiscriminately, taking a piece now from this, now from that. The fellâh of the poorer sort is generally content with a purely vegetable diet—bread and garlic, sugar-cane, peas, maize, and dom-nut. He rarely indulges in meat, or eggs, or milk. After the evening meal our citizen either remains at home, enjoying a dignified ease in his harîm, or he takes up his position before his house, stretched out in the dust of the street, or squatting amidst a knot of peaceful neighbours; less frequently he visits the café again, or calls on a friend in his house or courtyard, if he has a friend able and ready to gather his friends around him for a social meeting in the evening. The light of the moon and stars suffices, or if in winter they must retreat into the dark chamber, the weak glimmer of an oil lamp. In this country nothing is known of nocturnal labours either of hand or head, even among the learned; and the many blind and blear-eyed people that here wander about have not contracted their ailments through over-straining their eyes. As to-day is, so is to-morrow, and the most momentous events passing in the great world here make on most people no impression whatever, for it is only a very few that receive a newspaper, and still fewer understand it. It is only the most urgent necessity that causes the citizen to take a journey, and when he does travel he makes a pilgrimage to Mekka, or, at most, goes to some other country in which Islâm prevails."*

* C. B. Klunzinger: *Upper Egypt*, 158-61.

Peasant women spend much more laborious days than their husbands. They do all the housework—wash, scour, cook, look after the children (after a fashion), and bake the bread. They are up before sunrise, preparing their husbands' coffee, and sometimes

A BEDAWY.

washing themselves in the Nile; but this is not absolutely necessary. They are not burdened with the numerous prayers of the men, and a pious woman is a great rarity. Their chief amusements are going to the bath and making protracted calls upon their lady friends. It is, however, essential that no man—not even their

A BEDAWY TENT.

husbands—be present at these merry-makings. Out of doors the country-woman is not very particular about letting herself be seen by men, and when one arrives in Nubia the swarthy ladies of the land seem to dispense with a great part even of the ordinary scanty attire of the peasantry; but no man may witness the social convivialities of the harîm within doors. Some Egyptian women never leave their house after they are married; but the poor cannot afford this luxury of virtue, since they must fetch the water from the well, forage for firewood, and purchase household necessaries.

The country life of Egypt is even more quiet and monotonous than rural existence at home. The people have, indeed, their festivals, but they are not held with the pomp and display which characterize the same feasts in the capital. The loud laughter caused by the antics of buffoons and mimics, and the excitement aroused by the performances of the dancing girls, constitute the peasant's delirious joys; and near the ruins of the great temple of Luxor one may still see the lineal descendants of the rude entertainments which delighted the Pharaohs and their subjects. But the even tenor of the peasant's life suffers few rude shocks, and is seldom upset by gaiety or excitement. The festivities of marriages and births and the saints' days form the chief varieties in the quiet routine of leisurely work. Even the Bedawis, whose tribes fringe the cultivated lands, and whose nomad life has so many romantic associations, enjoy but little variety of scene or occupation. Looking after sheep and cattle, diversified with petty larceny and occasional raids on villages, probably forms as monotonous an existence as sowing and reaping crops or drilling pipe-stems. But the Bedawis are not Egyptians, though they form a picturesque feature in the sights of Egypt.

CHAPTER XI

ENGLAND'S WORK IN EGYPT

For the last fifty years it has been the policy of the rulers of Egypt to imitate the fashions and material improvements, rather than the energy and morals, of Europe. From Mohammed 'Aly to the Khedive Isma'îl the viceroys of the reigning family have attempted, with varied success, to introduce among their subjects European customs and inventions, and from the Suez Canal to the Nile steamers, western machines and manufactures are encountered at every step in the land of the Pharaohs. Instead of going up from Alexandria to Cairo in a sailing-boat on the Mahmûdîya Canal, as everybody did fifty years ago, and grumbled very audibly at the dreariness and discomfort of the tedious voyage, we now perform the journey in five

THE RAW MATERIAL.

hours in a railway furnished with carriages exactly like those of England thirty years ago. Dusty, rattling, and old-fashioned, they are still railway coaches, and they are managed by guards and porters, ticket-collectors and station-masters, who closely resemble their European contemporaries, except that they are less expeditious and infinitely more civil. We dine or lunch on the journey at a station restaurant where a regular table-d'hôte of the stereotyped order, which becomes so insufferably tedious and monotonous after a very brief experience of travel, awaits us, to be moderately paid for in francs; and on arriving at Cairo we find an omnibus in attendance ready to convey us to an unmistakably European hotel, where French and Italian waiters and German managers speak all the languages of the world, and Indian servants do the meaner departments of work. Crowds of donkey-boys and dragomans only confirm the European impression, for they address us with instant discrimination in our native tongue, whatever it may be, and charm our ears with our national expletives. In front of the spacious verandah of Shepheard's Hotel—the meeting-place of all Frankish Cairo for gossip in the afternoon, and a delightful lounge when we are too lazy or tired to go sight-seeing—the eminently European shops of the Ezbekîya display their plate-glass windows and the Greek, Italian, and Levantine rogues who stand smoking within, ready to cheat us; and we shall have to go some distance before we can find the picturesque cupboard-shop of the East, with its sedate occupant and its queer little stock-in-trade. In the evening, if we like, we can hear a French opera bouffe and see a French ballet in a theatre exactly resembling those we left behind in London. If we call upon our Minister, we shall find him in a Gallican villa surrounded by a hundred similar villas, which might belong to any Mediterranean city but for a vision of negro footmen and bronzed guards. Wherever we go we find palaces of the Khedive or members of his family. Abdîn and Isma'îlîya are the chief palaces in Cairo itself, though there are others, and beyond the limits of the metropolis the names of these gorgeous mansions is

AN ARAB FAMILY.

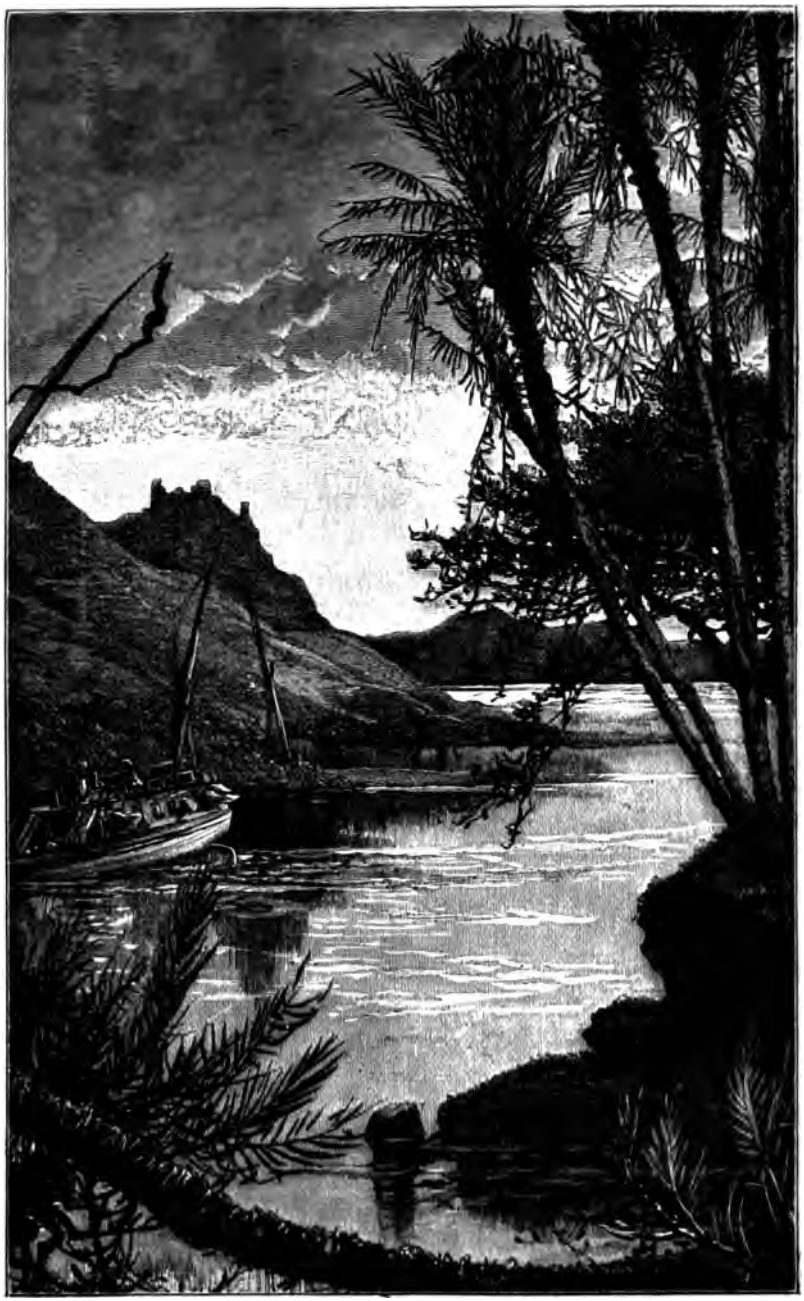
IN THE DESERT.

legion. At Kasr En-Nîl and all along the neighbouring banks of the Nile, on the islands of Rôda and Gezîra, at Gîza, 'Abbâsîya, Shubra—everywhere, rise the unsightly and ill-built palaces in which viceregal extravagance and ostentation have found an outlet. Not one of all these huge buildings is other than an eyesore. Not

A DRAGOMAN.

one is tastefully furnished. The Khedive's reception-room at Abdîn palace used to be a monument of the meretricious style which rejoices in gold and crimson and pier-glasses.

Not content with building a separate European quarter—the assemblage of villas grouped about parallel roads known as the suburb of Isma'ilîya—and piling up stones into barrack-like palaces,



ELEPHANTINE.

the genius (or Khedivelry, as an indignant lover of art termed it) of the Khedive Isma'îl set about the remodelling of the picturesque native quarters, and opened out the dreary thoroughfare called the "Boulevard Mohammed 'Aly" from the Ezbekîya to the citadel —pulling down the old houses of the oriental style, and leaving local builders to set up whatever they chose in their place. The consequence is that the houses are after the worst pattern of a fifth-rate artisans' suburb; there is no regularity, no attempt at either magnificence or beauty; and the "Boulevard Mohammed 'Aly" is a disgrace to Cairo. Happily the late Khedive abjured his father's methods, and under his present Highness 'Abbâs Pasha we may hope to see no more wanton barbarism.

It is not only the buildings in the Frank quarters that give a European impression: half the people in the streets wear European dress, modified in the case of native officials and others by the red fez and a somewhat clerical cut of the frock-coat. The ladies of the rich harîms go about in broughams driven by English coachmen. The familiar street-lamps of our native isle greet our eyes at every corner in all their inevitable unsightliness: the only difference is that the lamplighters are drawn up on parade by an officer, and dispatched in couples on their rounds with edifying military precision. If we go up the Nile, it will probably be in one of Messrs. Cook's comfortable steamers, in which one can visit every important place and monument from Cairo to the First Cataract in three weeks, with all imaginable comfort and without the risks and delays, though also without the charm and privacy, of the old *dahabîya*; or a detestably dusty and superannuated railway will convey us, half smothered, as far up the country as Asyût, whence a regular service of postal steamers will enable us to continue the journey by water. At Thebes we may stay at well-found European hotels. From point to point we can telegraph our whereabouts to all parts of the world. In fine, if we choose, we can go through Egypt in as European a manner as through Switzerland.

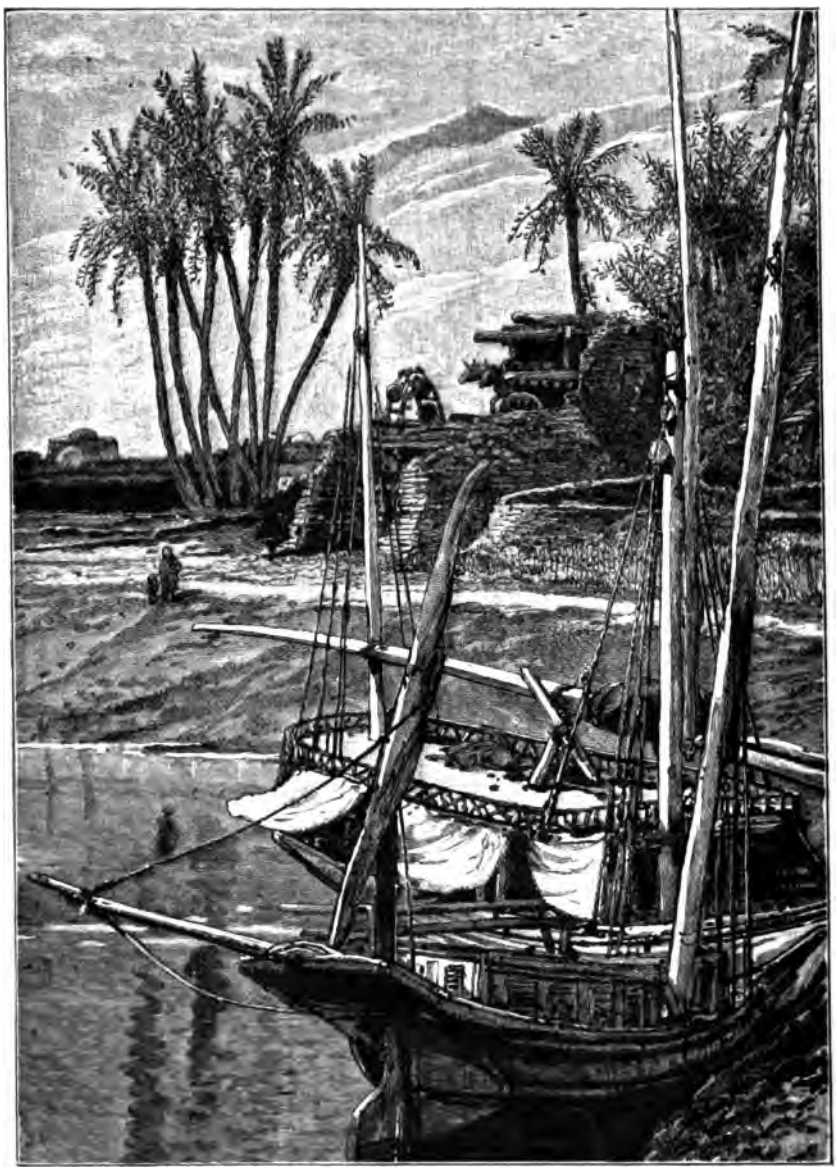
Most of these innovations are due to the genius and reckless-

ness of the ex-Khedive Isma'îl. A man of undoubted ability, possessed of unusual energy in administration, fully appreciative of the importance of Western civilisation, fired with the ambition proper in the grandson of Mohammed 'Aly, the ex-Khedive at first appeared a ruler such as Egypt had scarcely seen since the Arab conquest. After removing, at great cost, much of the irksome control of the Porte, and obtaining for himself and his dynasty a settled vice-regal rank and European order of succession, Isma'îl began a series of reforms, or at least changes, such as no previous governor of Egypt had ever contemplated. He restored and improved Mohammed 'Aly's administrative system, remodelled the customs, purchased the post-office and placed it under an official from St. Martin's-le-Grand, who soon brought it into an admirably efficient state, and established branch offices and a regular postal service all over the country. He revived the military schools founded by his grandfather, and endeavoured in various ways to introduce some approach to a reasonable educational system into Egypt. The unfair advantages accorded to Europeans by the old system of consular jurisdiction were partly done away when Isma'îl founded the new Mixed Tribunals in 1876, wherein European and native judges sit side by side to try cases of mixed nationality without prejudice, and where certainly more justice is awarded than in the distinctively native courts, though there is still room for improvement. Justice is still one of the rarest of Egyptian products or of European imports. Public works formed a large item in the ex-Khedive's budget of reforms. Railways, telegraphs, lighthouses, harbour-works at Suez, Port Saîd, and Alexandria, all testify to his energy, if not to his prudence. The railways, which are State property, cover more than eleven hundred miles, connect Alexandria and Cairo with every part of the Delta and Suez, and run half-way to the First Cataract. Five and a half millions of passengers took tickets in 1891, and over two million tons of merchandise were carried in the trucks. The telegraphs extend over four thousand miles; and fourteen lighthouses have been built on the coasts of

the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. These are all indisputable improvements, whatever the lover of the picturesque may say.

Public works, however, reforms, and changes of all sorts, however advantageous, cannot be carried out for nothing; and the ex-Khedive was so blind a financier and so reckless a spendthrift, that he plunged his country into debt to the extent of nearly a hundred millions, and was reduced to tyrannical and dishonest shifts to meet the calls of his creditors. The result was his deposition, and the establishment of his son Taufîk, under the control of various and ever-changing liquidating bodies. Egypt was, in fact, treated as a bankrupt, and provided with trustees whose duty it was at all hazards to find the money for the dividends. Hence came all the financial schemes, the international jealousies, the late war, and the British occupation. But for Isma'îl's Europeanizing tendencies none of these things would have come to pass; and for a time the material advantages he conferred on Egypt were more than balanced by the calamities of war and debt which have been the outcome of his policy. Doubtless he was not wholly to blame; personally he reaped small profits from his borrowings, and was more robbed than robber. But while we may denounce English and French financing-houses for their unblushing plunder of Egypt, we cannot forgive the ex-Khedive his share in the loans which have proved so burdensome to his country.

Isma'îl's mistake lay, not in the aim he set before him, but in his manner of trying to attain it. No one can doubt that he was right, as the great founder of his dynasty, Mohammed 'Aly, was right, in striving to bring Egypt into line with European civilisation. It is all very well for artists and antiquaries—people who, like myself, care more about the past than the future—to groan over the changes which are taking place in Egypt under European influences; but it is perfectly obvious that these changes are, and have long been, inevitable. It is as much a waste of time to lament the passing away of the old order in Cairo as to deprecate the triumph of incompetent democracy in England. We have



MAHATTA, NEAR PHILAE.

to deal in both cases with *faits accomplis*, and there is no use in regretting what is past mending. What we have to do is to see how to make the most of the new conditions. In Egypt, I think, we are certainly turning them to the best possible account. Granting the necessity of reform, it is easy to see that Isma'îl failed for lack of patience and judgment. He tried to rush his transformation scene. He wanted by a stroke of the pen to turn the most conservative people on earth into a living embodiment of all the virtues of a progressive and enlightened civilisation. He had no patience for the slow conversion of a nation almost as stolid and immovable as their own Pyramids. Their whole system was to be changed in an instant by a *coup de théâtre*, with trap-doors, stage-thunder, and a shower of fireworks. It was not so to be done, as Isma'îl has by this time realised in his meditative seclusion at Stambûl. Inexhaustible patience, tact, and discretion are needed before the immemorial vices of Egyptian government and the time-honoured corruption of Egyptian society can be transformed.

What Isma'îl in his thoughtless headlong haste failed to accomplish, the deliberate machinery of experienced English administration is slowly but surely achieving. It may be mere patriotic conceit, but I am convinced that no other nation is fit to teach Egypt the way she should walk but the race which has planted its colonies over all the broad face of the globe, and has shown in its matchless government of India what splendid results the rule of Englishmen may achieve among alien creeds and nationalities. The work we have done superbly in India we are doing in the same steady, persevering way in Egypt. There are no brilliant exploits, no glamour of the magician's art, in our proceedings. We simply overhaul the whole machinery of government in our old vigorous methodical fashion; examine every department with our prosaic minuteness; pick out every cause of corruption and oppression in the unromantic spirit which has made our name a synonym for impartial justice wherever our rule extends; and slowly, carefully, discreetly, take each peccant

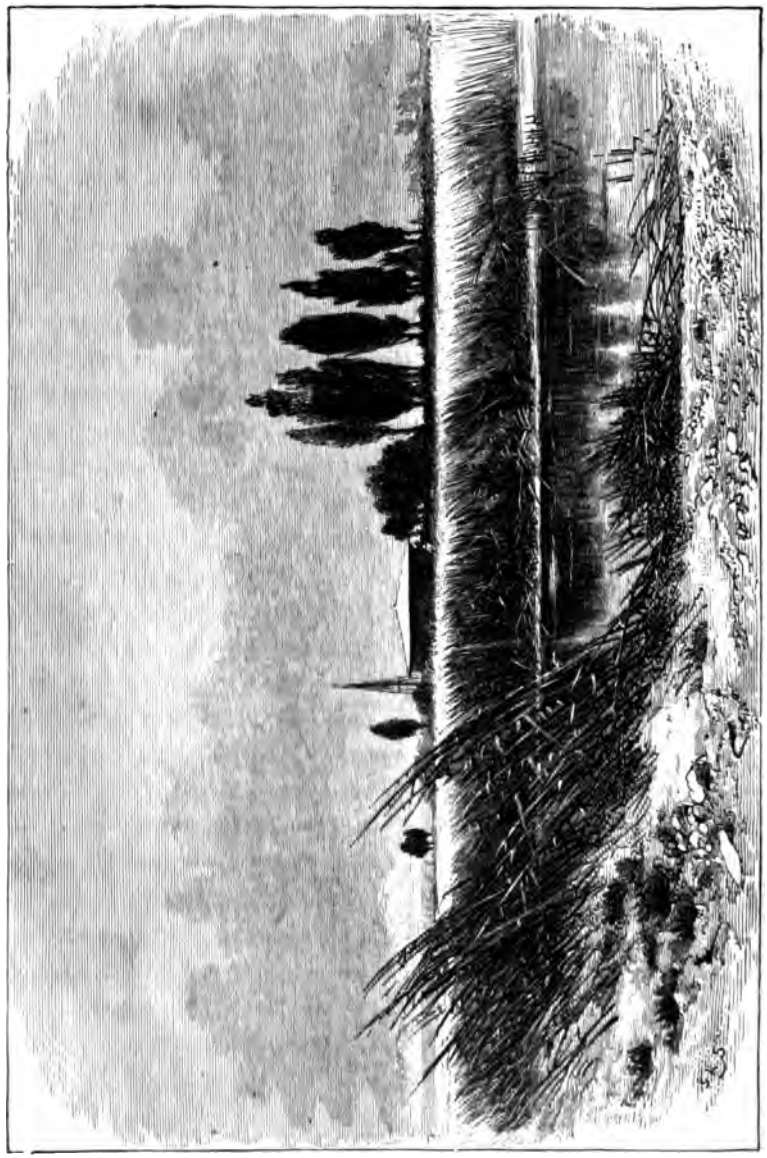
LAKE TIMSÂH.

detail in hand and gradually transform it, till the whole State becomes remodelled under our omnipresent influence. Each separate act, each individual revision, may seem trivial and insignificant by itself, but it is the combination of all these acts, the sum of all these revisions, which constitutes the universal reform of Egypt at the hands of English administrators.

We have only to look on the Egypt of 1882 and the Egypt of 1892—"on this picture and on that"—to realise the change which has come over the state of the country.

In 1882, after years of the greatest financial difficulties, Egypt was very near bankruptcy. The revenue did not meet the expenditure. The hundred-pound stock stood at forty: "Egyptians" were a by-word on 'Change. The administration was corrupt to a degree far exceeding any that had preceded it; for inexperienced and ignorant troopers like Arâby and his colleagues could have no conception of executive duties: they had broken up the few tentative reforms which had been hazarded by the Dual Control, and had substituted an "Egypt for the Egyptians" in a sense which the Pharaohs would have appreciated. They filled the bureaux with their friends and relations, and multiplied the official sinecures to such a degree that in two years the number of government employés rose from 14,000 to 17,363. Promotion as well as appointment went by favour, and there never was a sunnier time for ministers' nephews and diplomatic orderlies. The provinces were under the heels of the mudîrs, who "were allowed to commit acts of oppression and illegality unrestrained and unpunished by the central authorities. In their hands lay the power of administering justice, of collecting the taxes, and of providing men for the *corvée* and for the army. The mudîrs were omnipotent in their provinces. They were, indeed, responsible for everything that occurred; but provided no serious outbreak took place and the taxes came in regularly, no questions were asked, and their despotic authority remained unchallenged. The one principle of the Government was the courbash, arbitrary imprisonment, and at times the application of torture." The central

government did not care what the local authorities did, provided



A SEA OF REEDS, BETWEEN ISMA'ILIYA AND SUEZ.

the taxes were gathered; and it was never asked who paid the

taxes, or how much vanished in the winnowing sieves of all the officials concerned, from the collectors and village sheykhs up to the provincial governors. In spite of 12,000 troops and 6,000 police in the country, there was little public security, and daring gangs of robbers levied blackmail with impunity. This was not surprising when it is remembered that the troops were recruited with iniquitous partiality, and the conscripts, after being illegally drawn, were brought in chains to the colours, where incompetent officers only confirmed their original hatred of the service, and years of ill-treatment, bad food, and tyranny produced the direct reverse of discipline and efficiency. The police were recruited from the dregs of the populace, and subsisted on the bribes of the criminal class. The judges were in the same tale, for venality is a tradition on the Egyptian bench, and ten years ago the dispensers of justice were ignorant men who knew neither law nor honesty. The prisons were crowded with prisoners who were illegally detained, and kept in filthy cells, herded like animals, without trial or inspection, for months or years. The hospitals were little better than the prisons, overcrowded and unsanitary; and the lunatic asylums were like wild beasts' cages, only, unlike the beast, the lunatic was half starved. The slave trade had been officially abolished in 1877, yet in 1882 slaves were freely and openly sold in the markets of Cairo. The special slavery of the *corvée* was in full force: 200,000 men were called out for a hundred days for this labour; and yet the irrigation works were never more neglected; embankments were tumbling to pieces, canals choked up, lands going out of cultivation, and such water as was to be had for irrigation was sold to the giver of the highest bribe. Such was Egypt under Arâby and his patriots in 1882: and such, or little better, has been the government of Egypt since Cheops laid the first stone of the Great Pyramid, and set the *corvée* to work some six thousand years ago.

In 1892 there is a very different story to tell. Egypt is now financially on a sound basis; her stock is at par and forms a first-class security; her ministers are able to show a surplus of

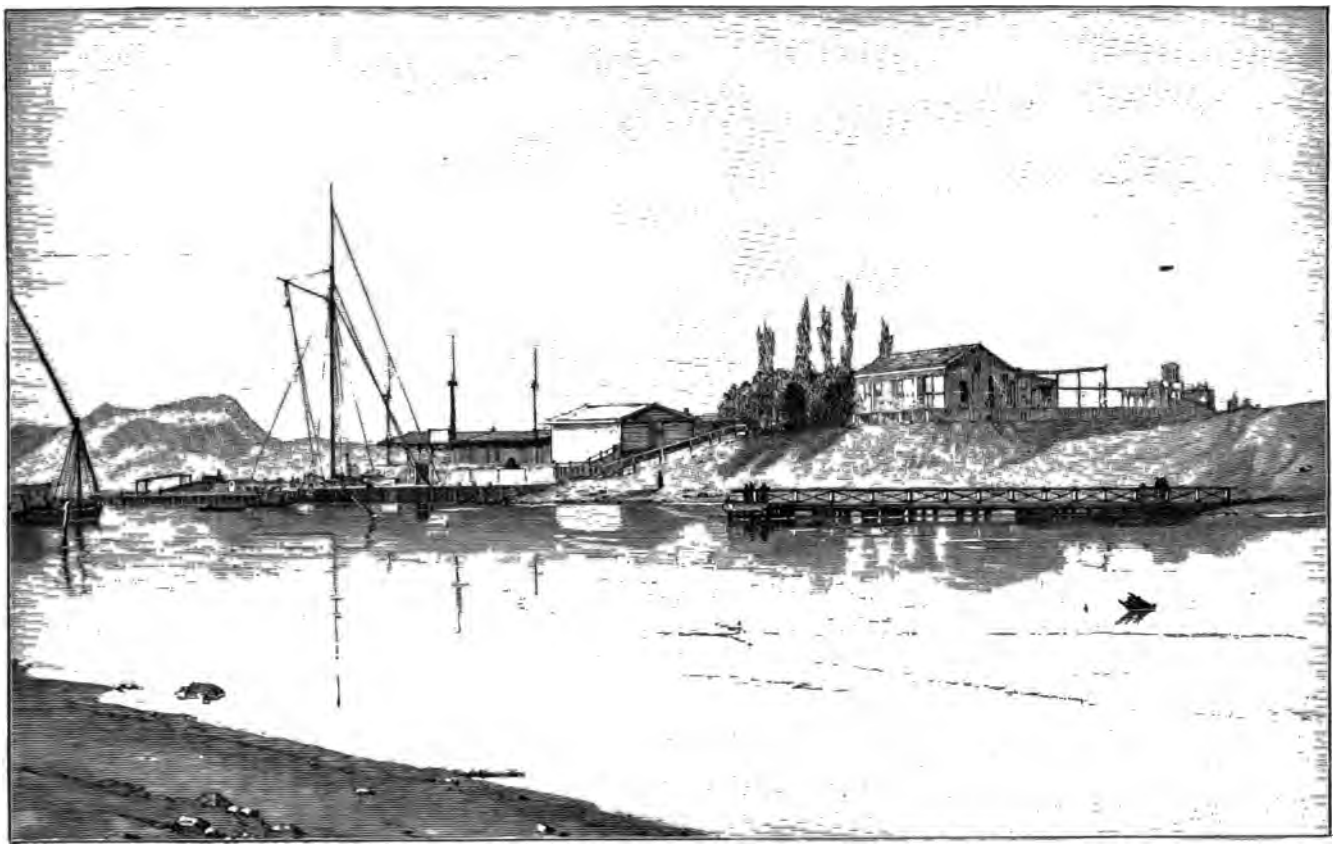
over a million pounds on the accounts of last year. These accounts are now in perfect order, properly kept and audited, and regularly published, and payments are made in a reformed currency. The revenue of ten and a half millions is obtained by economy and supervision, not by oppression and unequal taxation. The land-tax has been reduced by £650,000 a year; but the revenue has nevertheless increased, because the taxes are not allowed to melt away in the pockets of the collectors. It is not maintained that even now the incidence of taxation is perfectly equitable; but there is no illegal extortion. The amount of the land-tax, or in other words the rent, is fixed, and the peasant knows exactly how much he has to pay, and when he must pay it. The mudîrs and local governors are under strict surveillance. The *corvée* and *kurbâg* are things of the past; the irrigation, as we have seen, is scientifically and honestly distributed. Superfluous officials have been dismissed. The local law-courts are not yet all that they should be, but considerable progress has been made in the task of suppressing bribery and corruption, and the Native Tribunals, instituted in 1883, with the Code Napoléon for their statute-book, have worked on the whole well. The prisons have been taken in hand, placed under an English director, systematically inspected, and reformed. Overcrowding has ceased, sanitation has improved—though this is a very weak point throughout the land, in towns and villages as well as prisons—and a decree, which may be called the *Habeas Corpus* of Egypt, provides for the punishment of officials for illegal and prolonged detention of prisoners in gaol, and for the speedy trial of all accused persons before competent tribunals. The hospitals are now in a thoroughly efficient state. The army, instead of being the hated instrument of injustice it used to be held, is now popular. Conscription is carried out with absolute impartiality, and the numbers required for the present reduced establishment are easily raised. The men find that they are well treated and fed, and the result of improved discipline has been seen in several recent engagements with the Mahdi's intrepid followers, in which

the Egyptian battalions have successfully wiped out the stigma that formerly disgraced them. The police have justified the expectations of Sir Evelyn Wood, the creator of the new gendarmerie. The manumission of slaves has gone on so rapidly that few households now possess avowedly any slaves at all. In 1884, for example, nine-tenths of the men who worked the irrigation machines in the province of Esnê were slaves. In 1891, nine-tenths were free. Sir Evelyn Baring—to give Lord Cromer his old title—declares that no slaves are now sold in any part of Egypt, and that domestic slavery is rapidly dying out. The late Khedive Taufîk, personally a man of the highest character, lent all his influence towards carrying out this reform —if such it prove to be in the long run—in which he was deeply interested.

"The reforms which we have been instrumental in introducing into Egypt have been brought about by no arbitrary or violent measures. They have been instituted gradually, unostentatiously, under the full light of criticism, and without any undue display of harsh authority. They have been brought about more by the aid of friendly advice and rational council than by the overbearing dictation of a dominant Power. English experience in colonisation, and more especially the experience gained in the administration of India, has contributed materially to the partial accomplishment of a most difficult task. From India we have drawn skilled and trained officials fully able to cope with the intricate details of financial administration in the East, and with the extensive and complicated works of irrigation which it was so essential to introduce into Egypt. Previous intercourse with Orientals has taught such officials how to guard against wounding the susceptibilities of a Mussulman population, and how to institute reforms while paying à due regard to the character, the customs, and the religion of the people they have to deal with." *

At the same time, whilst rejoicing in this record of good and

* See Mr. F. S. Clarke's admirable Reports on Egypt, No. 4, 1889, and No. 6, 1888; and Sir E. Baring's Dispatch, No. 3, 1892.



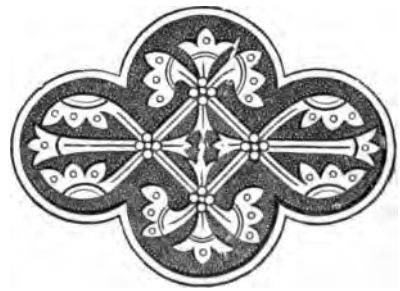
KANTARA, ON THE SUEZ CANAL.

honest work, it does not do to be too sanguine. It is still early days to talk of being out of the wood. The native officials, without English supervision, would probably become little less corrupt than of old, and though they may find it good policy to pretend to admire Western methods of government, they inwardly adhere to their ancient predilection for the rule of the stick. It must be remembered that we have not been very careful of the example we set them. Europeans have dealt with Egypt as a land to be plundered, and the people cannot help regarding us as their spoilers. A long record of usury and bonds and financial jugglery has to be effaced before we can talk about honesty to the Egyptians. Moreover, we are, and shall ever be, infidels and aliens in their eyes. It is not likely that the barriers of religion and nationality will be broken down. Yet, if ever we be able to help the Egyptians to permanently improve their condition, it will be under the present system. The clumsy and equivocal government by dual control has given way to a rule in which the financial claims of Egypt are not allowed to be the prime consideration. We are lending Egypt a body of single-minded and capable officials, who are responsible, not to bondholders, but to England and the Khedive, and whose first aim is to do well by the people of Egypt themselves, and not by foreign stockbrokers. For the first time in history Egypt is being governed thoroughly and with right motives, and now, if ever, the Egyptians will be taught what English influence means in the hands of just rulers. Hitherto our hands have not been clean enough to warrant any affectation of moral superiority. Now we have had the chance of showing, and we have shown conspicuously, that England has other than selfish interests in Egypt, and that English rule makes no distinction between races and persons, but aims at the general good of the community. If the new rule continues to work well, as it will if untrammelled by factious interference from Downing Street, there will yet be new and happier chapters to write on European influence in Egypt.

At the same time it would be a very vain hope to look forward

LAKE MAREOTIS.

to anything like European civilisation in the land of Khemi. One must recognise the essential differences of race and history. Seven thousand years of monotonous oppression can hardly be expected to produce the same results as a long past filled with successful efforts in the direction of self-government. Those who know the people can with difficulty restrain a smile when they read of "local institutions" and a "representative system" whereby the Egyptians will be enabled to govern themselves. Such visions of a future belong to dreamland, not to practical statecraft. If we see the agricultural resources of the country developed to their fullest capabilities, an honest official class substituted for the old pashadom, an incorruptible judicature dealing even-handed justice to rich and poor, and some approach to a European standard of education, we may be well pleased with the progress of Egypt, and England will have good cause to be proud of herself. For without England nothing would have been accomplished, and if England, after laying her hand to the plough, looks back, all that has been won by her patient endeavours will assuredly be lost.



NOTE ON THE MOSQUE OF 'AMR.

WHEN revising the description of this mosque (pp. 44—8), as given by the late Rogers Bey and his sister, I had not the opportunity of consulting Mr. Eustace K. Corbett's exhaustive essay on "The History of the Mosque of 'Amr at Old Cairo," published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, new series, vol. xxii., and on referring to it later, I think it necessary to supplement or correct some of the previous statements by Mr. Corbett's important results, which he has illustrated by some excellent plans and drawings. Of the original mosque founded by 'Amr in 642, nothing whatever remains. It was "a simple oblong room, 28·9 metres by 17·34; the low roof no doubt supported by a few columns, . . . the walls probably of baked, but very possibly only unbaked bricks, and unplastered; the floor pebble-strewn; the light probably supplied, as in the great colonnade at the present day, through square apertures in the roof. It possessed no minarets or other attractive outside feature; no niche nor any other internal decoration." Even the pulpit which 'Amr set up was taken away by order of the Khalif, who wrote: "Is it not enough for thee to stand up while the Muslims sit at thy feet?" In this humble building the conqueror of Egypt recited the prayers and preached the sermon: one of his sermons has been recorded by El-Makrîzy, from a well-traced tradition. This original building soon proved too small for the growing population, and in 673 the governor Maslama enlarged it somewhat to the eastwards, in the direction of what had been the house of 'Amr; he also plastered the walls, spread mats on the pebbly ground, and built look-outs or raised stations—the germ of the minaret—at the corners for the mueddins to chant the *adân*. In 698-9 'Abd-El-'Azîz ibn Marwân entirely demolished the whole building and rebuilt it on a

larger scale. This was only one of numerous reconstructions and additions, and there is probably hardly a single piece of the mosque which has not been repaired and rebuilt. The most important restoration took place in 827, when 'Abdallah ibn Tâhir doubled the size of the mosque and added the great mihrâb. The mosque now measured 109 by 86 metres, and grew no more for five hundred years, though it was frequently decorated and altered, and then as often neglected for long periods. Among the splendid possessions of the mosque was a present from the Fâtimy Khalif El-Hâkim, in 1013, of 4,200 copies of the Korân, some written in gold, and a huge chandelier weighing 100,000 dirhems of silver.

In 1168 the city of Fustât, like Moscow, was intentionally burned, to save it from falling into the hands of Amaury's Crusaders, and the mosque of 'Amr was much injured by the fire, though its walls still stood. Saladin repaired and paved it with marble, but it was hopeless to attempt to restore the mosque to its old frequented state. The city around was in ruins, the congregation was dispersed, and the mosque was often and long neglected. Ibn Sa'id the Moor visited it towards the middle of the thirteenth century, and found it covered with cobwebs, and scrawled over with the scribblings of loafers, children, and hawkers, the remains of whose victuals littered the court. Soon after this the Mamlûk Sultan Aybek replastered and repaired the neglected sanctuary: but the old building had fallen into evil days; it was no longer frequented by crowds of pious worshippers, and soon became dilapidated once more. During this long period of disuse the mosque of 'Amr was put to many unseemly purposes. "Musicians and ape-leaders and conjurers and mountebanks and Ghawâzy girls gathered together in the court," says the historian El-Gabarty; till the building grew too decrepit and ruinous even for this sort of visitors. At last, in 1798, Murâd Bey, "being anxious about his soul," set about the work of restoration, and paid for it out of money "which he had taken impiously, and employed unrighteously." Four months later, as Mr. Corbett points out, Murâd was fighting the French at Embâba in the "Battle of the Pyramids" on which the "forty centuries" looked down. Since his time such repairs as have been made are but trifling. What we see to-day is therefore, to all intents, the mosque of 'Abdallah ibn Tâhir, as restored by Murâd Bey just one thousand lunar years later (A.H. 212: 1212).

CHAPTER XII

MEDIAEVAL SILVERWORK

In the latter half of the thirteenth century of Grace, or the seventh since the flight of the Blessed Prophet (upon whom be peace and the mercy of God and his blessings) from Mekka to Medina, there dwelt in the city of Cairo a nobleman whose name was Full Moon of the Faith Beysary. Mohammedans see nothing ludicrous in such spiritual combinations as Praise-God Bare-bones, and every respectable citizen, much more every prince, had his string of epithets, which often ran to much greater length than the simple style of Bedr-ed-dîn Beysary. This nobleman, however, could, on occasion, as we shall see, glorify himself with a few more titles, and he was ordinarily spoken of with the addition of some such epithet as Es-Sâlihy, which betokened that, like most of his fellow nobles, he was sprung from the ranks of the Mamlûks, or military white slaves, of a prince called Es-Sâlih, who was, in fact, the grand-nephew of Saladin.*

Beysary was not one of the turbulent sort of Mamlûks. He valued his comfort, and twice declined the honour of the sultanate when it was pressed upon him. Even so, he could not escape the consequences of being rich and distinguished; and though he apparently had no ambition that could interfere with the designs of his peers, he was suspected of undue pretensions, and spent a large part of his life in prison. It was not to be supposed that successive sultans would neglect an opportunity of enriching themselves at the expense of a quiet law-abiding

* See above, Chap. III., p. 68 ff.

gentleman, whose palace offered unequalled temptations to the covetous. It occupied four acres of ground, with its bath and garden, and was adorned with the finest mosaics and the richest carved doors in Cairo. Bedr-ed-dîn Beysary was indeed the most sumptuous man of his time. He loved to surround himself with beautiful things, and his slave body-guard was the best appointed of the day. No fortune could support his lavish extravagance. He not only spent upon himself, but gave prodigally to all who asked him. Hospitality was his foible, and his gifts to the poor ran in round sums of five hundred or a thousand dirhems (say francs) to each applicant. He would daily distribute three thousand pounds of meat, and a single present consisted of a thousand pieces of gold, five thousand bushels of corn, and a thousand hundredweight of honey. One of his Mamlûks used every day to draw ninety pounds of meat and seventy rations of barley, which is to be presumed neither he nor his horses could possibly digest. Naturally Beysary was perpetually in debt. The constant amount of his liabilities is placed by the historian El-Makrîzy at 400,000 francs, for as soon as one debt was paid off, the generous soul hastened to contract another of the same figure. A considerable part of his expenditure must have gone in table equipage, for it is recorded that he never drank twice out of the same cup; and as El-Makrîzy mentions that at one time (to use M. Quatremère's words) this thirteenth century epicure *était entièrement livré au vin et au jeu*, the number of cups required must have been considerable. But a great and cultivated Mamlûk needed more than cups for his comfort: he must have inlaid tables on which to put the broad brass tray encrusted with chased silver and gold, which carried his service of the forbidden fruit of the grape; he must have his beautiful hall lighted by candles placed in elaborate stands, covered with silver inlay; his very tubs and cooking pots must be chased with arabesques and complicated designs, and his palace must be perfumed with incense rising from perfume-burners on which the artist had engraved representations of horsemen at the

chase, hounds and beasts, falcons and waterfowl, and the rest of the decorative materials of the Saracen silversmith.

Plenty of these utensils may be seen in the British and South Kensington Museums, and in the former there is actually a vessel which comes from the house of Lord Beysary himself. This is

PERFUME-BURNER OF THE AMIR BEYSARY (BRITISH MUSEUM).

a brass perfume-burner,* bearing the name of Beysary, together with his ornamental titles. It consists of two almost identical hemispheres, each of which is ornamented with five medallions, enclosing two-headed eagles with barred wings and spreading tails, on a ground of arabesques, while bands of Arabic inscriptions

* It is impossible to do justice to this delicate class of work in process-reproductions.

above and below the eagles record the following not too modest titles:—"Made by order of his excellency, the generous, the exalted, the lord, the great Amîr, the honourable, the master, the marshal, the warrior for the Faith, the warden of Islam, the mighty, the Heaven-supported, the victorious, Full Moon of the Faith, Beysary, the liegeman of Edh-Dhâhir," &c., &c. The absence of one title which was adopted at a fixed date proves that the vessel must have been made before A.D. 1279. The inscriptions and designs are inlaid with silver by sinking the whole surface to be inlaid, and undercutting the edges. The silver is as nearly as possible level with the surface of the brass, and is held simply by the rebate of the enclosing edges.

The eagles tell the story of its manufacture. Saladin introduced decorative eagles into Cairo, but their true home is in the Euphrates valley, where we find the local princes of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries frequently employing two-headed eagles, closely resembling those on Beysary's perfume-burner, on their copper coins, long before the imperial double eagle was known to Europe. The rulers of Mesopotamia at that time were mainly successful Turkish soldiers who had served in the armies of the Seljuks, and, although Mohammedans, were not so well trained in the minor regulations of their religion as to view with true Muslim abhorrence the representation of living things which the Blessed Prophet had sternly condemned. That "every painter is in hell-fire" was a sacred tradition to which the warlike princes of Mesopotamia shut their ears, and they showed as little interest in the terrible penalty that was believed to await every artist in the "life school,"—of being compelled to breathe a soul into his creation, or else to be dragged on his face to the infernal regions. These Tartar princes, on the contrary, delighted to stamp their money with representations of men and saints, copied from the hagiology of Byzantium, and we even find the Virgin and Christ innocently portrayed on the large copper coins of the very Amîrs who strove hardest against the "polytheistic" Crusaders. It was doubtless to this unorthodox toleration of

human and animal design that the sudden activity of the Môsil school in the thirteenth century was due. The source of the early metal work of the Mamlûks is to be traced, like the eagles which adorn it, to the Mesopotamian artists who drew their traditions from their forefathers, the smiths who wrought the Balawat gates in Assyrian times; who made the Sasanian cups, familiar to antiquaries; and who finally introduced upon vessels, which the lips of puritanical Muslims were to touch, the forbidden scenes of festivity and sport which had been celebrated in Persian art from remote antiquity. Though we possess but scattered links in the chain, there is no doubt that the skill in working metals which the Assyrians developed and the Phoenicians carried abroad, which the Sasanians inherited and the Persians still evince, was a permanent inheritance of the people of Mesopotamia. The earliest specimens of Saracenic metalwork which we in England possess are from this region, and one example in the British Museum bears the name of Lulu, a well-known prince of Môsil; whilst another in the same collection, represented on page 308, has an inscription which states that it was "engraved at Môsil by Shugâ', son of Hanfar, native of Môsil, in the blessed month of God, the month Rejeb, of the year 629 of the Hijra," A.D. 1232.

But this Môsil art was not the sole source of all the Saracenic metalwork. We have historical evidence of examples much earlier than the thirteenth century, apparently made in Egypt under the rule of the Fâtimy Khalifs. Oriental historians are fond of recording the treasures possessed by the princes of this dynasty. The daughter of one of them is said to have left property to the value of two million seven hundred thousand pieces of gold, and it took forty pounds of wax to set seals on her coffers and doors. Among this lady's treasures were three hundred silver vases chased and inlaid, four hundred swords damascened with gold, thirty thousand pieces of Sicilian stuff, five bushels of emeralds, and ninety basins and ewers of pure crystal. This was in the eleventh century, when we English were

satisfied with horn to drink from. The Khalif El-Mustansir, at about the same time, was obliged to allow his goods to be sold up by the soldiery, and we read of inlaid and enamelled plates of gold, caskets of choice woods inlaid with gold, thousands of inlaid silver and gold vases for flowers, chased washtubs, mirrors, *étuis*, &c., to say nothing of gold brocades, and embroidered stuffs,

MÔSIL EWER, A.D. 1232 (BRITISH MUSEUM).

and ornaments of precious stones. Unfortunately we have only the statements of the historians to go upon, for these multitudinous treasures have not come down to us, and the evidence of inscribed objects of the tenth and eleventh centuries is still wanting. The Bayeux ivory casket, with its silver plates, is, indeed, probably a specimen of Fâtimy work, to judge from the style of its inscription, but it may be no older than the twelfth,

or even the beginning of the thirteenth century. A couple of rock crystal vessels certainly belonging to the tenth century, and seem to indicate corresponding skill in the treatment of other substances, but this is hardly satisfactory evidence. The early Saracenic work of the Fâtimis may be credited, but, till we can examine specimens of it, it would be rash to express any positive opinion as to its style, origin, or influence.

The Mesopotamian or Môsil work, which, after lying dormant under the Khalifs, was vivified by the influence of unorthodox Turkish or Kurdish invaders, and sprang into new life in the thirteenth century, is therefore the earliest class of which we possess a sufficient number of specimens to be able to judge of its character. The striking feature of Môsil work is the predominant employment of figures of men and animals engaged in hunting scenes of the traditional Persian type. Aureoled horsemen hunt lions and other beasts with lance and bow, or with coursing leopard or cheetah hanging at the stirrup or crupper, or pursue the antelope or hare with hounds or falcon on the wrist. Players of pipes, and lyres, and cymbals, alternate with seated cross-legged figures of princes, who hold the forbidden wine-cup in the hand. Or a zone of the signs of the Zodiac, personified in sympathetic combination with the seven planets of eastern astrology, gives magical and medicinal influence to the bowl. The ewer in the British Museum, made, as has been said, at Môsil, in 1232, is ornamented with four zones containing hunting scenes, musical revels, and the like, enclosed in quatrefoils, upon a groundwork of the key pattern, all encrusted with silver. The side represented in the engraving shows various hunting-scenes, combats between beasts and men; a fight between a man on foot and a horseman; a cavalier with hawk on wrist and dog beneath the horse; a seated prince, holding the wine-cup, while a lute-player sits before him, and another figure seems to be fanning his royal master; and again, in a lower compartment, two figures playing harp and pipe are seen. There are altogether more than 130 distinct figures, human or animal, on this vessel, among which the most

curious are a man and woman in a howdah on camel-back, and another woman riding pillion behind an archer on a camel.

In the South Kensington Museum is a fine specimen of thirteenth-century Môsil work. It is a bronze bowl, inlaid with chased silver, and engraved inside and out with two zones of religious inscriptions in Arabic and with rows of medallions, enclosing, on the outside of the bowl, aureoled figures playing musical instruments, drinking and enjoying themselves, and, within, hunting scenes, men fighting with lions, carrying falcons, riding the elephant and camel; while on the bottom is a vigorous

MÔSIL BOWL, THIRTEENTH CENTURY
(SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM).

representation of a river sporting expedition, with three men pulling a boat, while a fourth keeps a look-out at the mast-head, and the rest shoot wild-fowl with their arrows, or tumble overboard almost into the jaws of an alligator. The labour of the artist must have been enormous, for not only is each portion of the design—figures, arabesque ground, and animal border—alike inlaid with silver by the tedious process of cutting away the whole design up to the edges, which are undercut, and then burnishing the silver into the recesses thus formed; but each little piece of silver, though it were only the size of a pin's head, had to be chased with the graver with eyes, or wings, or flowers,

according to the intention; and finally the spaces intervening between the silver plates had to be coated with a black bituminous composition, which set off the brilliancy of the precious metal while it concealed the base of copper or brass. In most existing examples the silver, and also the composition, is to a large extent worn off, but the process is easily ascertained from the portions that remain.

We have seen that the Egyptian Mamlûk Beysary employed

BOX OF SALADIN'S GRAND-NEPHEW, A.D. 1240
(SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM).

the Môsil style of workmanship for his perfume-burner, no doubt because it was the best to be had at the time. Mesopotamian artists were probably attracted to Cairo by the fame of the court of Saladin, and close relations were maintained in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries between the various members of his family, who ruled over Egypt, Syria, and the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates. The earliest specimen of Saracenic metalwork in the South Kensington Museum is a brass box, inlaid with silver,

which was made for El-Melik El-'Adil Seyf-ed-dunya wa-d-dîn (the Just King, Sword of State and Church), a grand-nephew of Saladin, who governed Egypt from 1238 to 1240. It is in the Môsil style of the earliest period; the sides are ornamented with dotted eight-foils (exactly resembling the ornament on the silver coins of the family of Saladin) containing hunting scenes, a combat with a lion, a horseman with falcon on wrist (which is covered with the falconer's glove), &c.; the intervening ground is decorated with fine arabesques, and an inscription on the bevel of the lid gives the name and titles of the sultan. On the top are personifications of the six planets (of Arabian science) surrounding the sun (the seventh); the Moon, a seated figure holding a crescent; Mercury, with his writing materials; Venus, a woman playing on the lyre; Mars, a warrior brandishing a sword and holding a bleeding head; Jupiter, a throned judge; and Saturn, patron of thieves, with his bludgeon and purse. Outside these is a band of the twelve signs of the Zodiac, represented much in the usual manner. On the bottom of the box is an inscription stating that it was made "for the royal wardrobe of El-'Adil."

Cairo soon acquired a school of her own, which seems to have possessed traditions coming from a different source than that of Môsil. The Cairo style is what we see on the numerous trays, bowls, cups, censers, and others vessels of the Mamlûks of Egypt of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, preserved in our museums and private collections. It may be called the Mamlûk style *par excellence*. Some points of resemblance to the Môsil work may be noticed, but the new elements are very distinct. The figures of horsemen and seated princes have for the most part disappeared, as it was natural they should when the Turkish princes became habituated to the puritanical prescriptions of Islâm concerning the treatment of living things in art; but the smaller forms, borders of beasts of the chase, and ground covered with ducks and other fowl, still remain. The prevalence of the duck, which was easily explicable in the swamps of Mesopotamia, finds

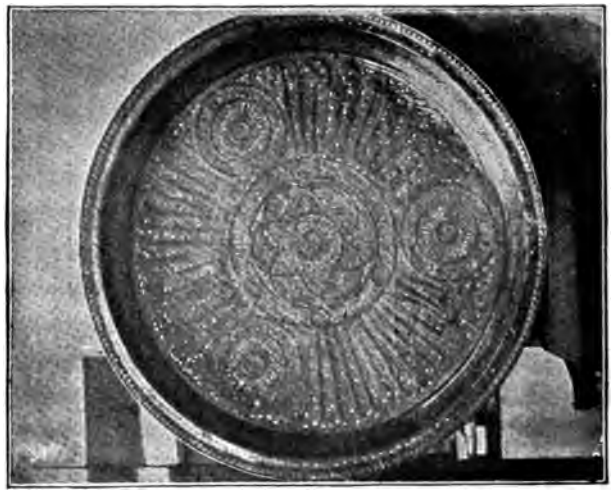
another *raison d'être* in Egypt, for the founder of the chief family of sultans who ruled in Cairo for nearly a century was a Turk of Kipchak, whose name, Kalaûn, means in his native Mongol tongue "duck." We may compare Abbot Islip's plastic puns on his own name in his chapel in Westminster Abbey. The ornament of the Mamlûk metalwork is essentially different in style from that of Môsil. The inscriptions are arranged in broad bands, with large surfaces of silver inlay, applied in a way already described, and divided by medallions, which are filled with the

BOWL OF EN-NÂSIR MOHAMMAD, CIRC. 1300
(BRITISH MUSEUM).

sultan's name on a fess, or else by some heraldic coat of arms, borne by the owner, among which the cup and polo-stick (indicating the court offices of cup-bearer and polo-master), the lozenge, and a curious imitation of a hieroglyphic inscription common on the ancient monuments of Egypt, but doubtless unintelligible to the copyists, are the most usual. Round the medallions are belts of flowers and leaves, reminding one of the designs of Damascus tiles; and similar leaves and flowers, interspersed with birds, cover the ground.

A fine example of the Mamlûk style is seen in the large bow

in the British Museum, which was made for the Sultan En-Nâsir Mohammad, son of the Kalaûn already mentioned, in the earlier half of the fourteenth century. The broad bands of Arabic inscriptions filled with the titles of the sultan and prayers for his prosperity, the rosettes of flowers and leaves, the ground of floral ornament interspersed with ducks and leaves, which seem to have an affinity to ducks' wings, the whorls in the borders, and the medallions, are all typical of the style and period, and so is the



MAMLÛK TRAY, A.D. 1345 (BRITISH MUSEUM).

shoal of fish inside at the bottom, indicating the watery contents of the bowl. The reign of En-Nâsir Mohammad was the culminating point of Mamlûk prosperity in Egypt. The Nâsiry Amîrs, slaves of this sultan, were, like their master, liberal patrons of the fine arts, and loved to fill their noble palaces with the choicest work that the "Market of the Inlayers" at Cairo could produce. Some of the furniture of En-Nâsir himself is preserved in the Arab Museum at Cairo, where two brass tables * of filigree work inlaid with silver are perhaps the finest specimens

* Illustrated above, pp. 101, 103, 105.

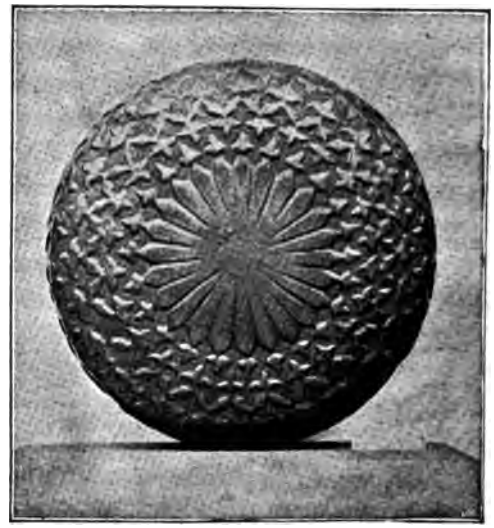
of the most delicate style of Saracenic inlay we know. Whenever we see a fine piece of brass or bronze work, the inscription is almost sure to tell us that it was made by order of "his excellency, the exalted, the mighty, the Heaven-supported, &c., Amîr, so-and-so, courtier of En-Nâsir." It is as elaborately inlaid as the Môsil style, but the silver is spread over larger surfaces as a

MAMLÛK STAND, FOURTEENTH CENTURY
(SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM).

rule, and more of the base metal is left between. A tray, which also belonged to the Sultan En-Nâsir, in the South Kensington Museum, has some gold inlay as well as silver, but this is exceptional, not on account of the costliness of gold, for the Mamlûks never seem to have counted the cost, but because gold does not show well against copper or the black composition which

continued to be used by the Cairo as well as the Môsil artists. Another and rather coarser tray of Sha'bân, son of En-Nâsir, is engraved on page 314. The forms of the Mamlûks vessels and other objects are not their strong point; the stand for supporting a tray again (page 315) is of no very graceful outline, but the floral rosettes which cover it in fine chased silver inlay redeem the shape.

The Mamlûk artists worked in the flat, as we have seen, like



KÂÏT BEY'S BOWL, FIFTEENTH CENTURY
(SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM).

the earlier Môsil school; the inlay is carefully reduced to the same level as the enclosing brass or bronze. One exception, which probably represents a class, is seen in the *repoussé* bowl (above) in the South Kensington Museum, which bears the name of the great architectural Sultan of Cairo, Kâït Bey, to whom we are indebted for two of the most beautiful mosques in the world, and other buildings of exquisite taste. The bottom of this bowl is beaten out into a *fleur-de-lys* design, the interstices of which are filled with delicate arabesques. El-Makrîzy tells us

that in his day, which preceded the reign of Kâït Bey, the metal work of Cairo had fallen into disrepute; but this specimen alone, which has all the appearance of coming from the same school of design that traced the stone carvings and inlaid the wood and ivory pulpits of Kâït Bey's mosques at Cairo, shows at least that the skill had not departed with the demand.

From Beysary to Kâït Bay is more than two hundred years, and during all that time the metalworkers of the chief cities of the Saracens were putting forth their skill in every variety of fine chasing and inlay. Egypt and Syria were full of the triumphs of their art, and Europe soon came to take a share in encouraging it. Space fails to tell of the introduction of Saracen artists to Venice, and the skill of Mahmûd the Kurd and his fellow-workmen, or to explain how the famous Giorgio Ghisi of Mantua came to call himself *Azzimina*,—a worker *all' Agemina*, *i.e.*, "of the Persian mode." The European development of the art is a separate subject,* and we must take leave of the Eastern Saracens and their smithies, before the conquest of the Ottoman Turks in the beginning of the sixteenth century inaugurated that long reign of bad art and miserable design which is characteristic of later work in Egypt. It is curious that the first Turkish slaves who governed Egypt, in spite of their savage origin in Kipchak, and the elementary notions they possessed of good government, should have fostered the choicest arts of the Saracens as they were never fostered before or since; and that the Ottomans, who had some experience of western civilisation and had ruled in Byzantium for half-a-century before they attempted the conquest of Egypt, should understand by art nothing but clumsy imitation and caricature.

* I attempted a slight outline of the Venetian branch of the subject in an article in the *Magazine of Art* for September, 1886.

NOTE ON THE MOSQUE OF 'AMR

WHEN revising the description of this mosque (pp. 44—8), as given by the late Rogers Bey and his sister, I had not the opportunity of consulting Mr. Eustace K. Corbett's exhaustive essay on "The History of the Mosque of 'Amr at Old Cairo," published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, new series, vol. xxii., and on referring to it later, I think it necessary to supplement or correct some of the previous statements by Mr. Corbett's important results, which he has illustrated by some excellent plans and drawings. Of the original mosque founded by 'Amr in 642, nothing whatever remains. It was "a simple oblong room, 28·9 metres by 17·34; the low roof no doubt supported by a few columns, . . . the walls probably of baked, but very possibly only unbaked bricks, and unplastered; the floor pebble-strewn; the light probably supplied, as in the great colonnade at the present day, through square apertures in the roof. It possessed no minarets or other attractive outside feature; no niche nor any other internal decoration." Even the pulpit which 'Amr set up was taken away by order of the Khalif, who wrote: "Is it not enough for thee to stand up while the Muslims sit at thy feet?" In this humble building the conqueror of Egypt recited the prayers and preached the sermon: one of his sermons has been recorded by El-Makrîzy, from a well-traced tradition. This original building soon proved too small for the growing population, and in 673 the governor Maslama enlarged it somewhat to the eastwards, in the direction of what had been the house of 'Amr; he also plastered the walls, spread mats on the pebbly ground, and built look-outs or raised stations—the germ of the minaret—at the corners for the mueddins to chant the *adân*. In 698-9 'Abd-El-'Aziz ibn Marwân entirely demolished the whole building and rebuilt it on a

larger scale. This was only one of numerous reconstructions and additions, and there is probably hardly a single piece of the mosque which has not been repaired and rebuilt. The most important restoration took place in 827, when 'Abdallah ibn Tâhir doubled the size of the mosque and added the great mihrâb. The mosque now measured 109 by 86 metres, and grew no more for five hundred years, though it was frequently decorated and altered, and then as often neglected for long periods. Among the splendid possessions of the mosque was a present from the Fâtimy Khalif El-Hâkim, in 1013, of 4,200 copies of the Korân, some written in gold, and a huge chandelier weighing 100,000 dirhems of silver.

In 1168 the city of Fustât, like Moscow, was intentionally burned, to save it from falling into the hands of Amaury's Crusaders, and the mosque of 'Amr was much injured by the fire, though its walls still stood. Saladin repaired and paved it with marble, but it was hopeless to attempt to restore the mosque to its old frequented state. The city around was in ruins, the congregation was dispersed, and the mosque was often and long neglected. Ibn Sa'îd the Moor visited it towards the middle of the thirteenth century, and found it covered with cobwebs, and scrawled over with the scribblings of loafers, children, and hawkers, the remains of whose victuals littered the court. Soon after this the Mamlûk Sultan Aybek replastered and repaired the neglected sanctuary: but the old building had fallen into evil days; it was no longer frequented by crowds of pious worshippers, and soon became dilapidated once more. During this long period of disuse the mosque of 'Amr was put to many unseemly purposes. "Musicians and ape-leaders and conjurers and mountebanks and Ghawâzy girls gathered together in the court," says the historian El-Gabarty; till the building grew too decrepit and ruinous even for this sort of visitors. At last, in 1798, Murâd Bey, "being anxious about his soul," set about the work of restoration, and paid for it out of money "which he had taken impiously, and employed unrighteously." Four months later, as Mr. Corbett points out, Murâd was fighting the French at Embâba in the "Battle of the Pyramids" on which the "forty centuries" looked down. Since his time such repairs as have been made are but trifling. What we see to-day is therefore, to all intents, the mosque of 'Abdallah ibn Tâhir, as restored by Murâd Bey just one thousand lunar years later (A.H. 212: 1212).

THE SARACEN RULERS OF EGYPT AND THEIR MONUMENTS

A.H. 21—926=A.D. 641—1517

I.—GOVERNORS APPOINTED BY THE KHALIFS

A.H.	A.D.	Ruler	Events and existing Monuments
21 to 254	641 to 868	The list of 98 Governors, to whom no distinctive work of art can be ascribed, is omitted. (Cp. Wüstenfeld, *Die Statthalter von Egypten*)	Conquest of Egypt, A.H. 21. *Mosque of 'Amr*, A.H. 21, but frequently restored (see p. 318). City of El-'Fustât, A.H. 21, and suburb of El-'Askar, A.H. 133.

II.—HOUSE OF TŪLŪN

254	868	Ahmad ibn Tūlūn	Suburb of El-Katâi', 256. *Mosque of Ibn-Tūlūn*, 263-5. Annexation of Syria as far as Aleppo, 264.
270	883	Khumâraweyh (son of Ahmad)	
282	895	Geysh Abu-l-Asâkir (sons of Khumâraweyh)	
283	896	Hârûn	
292	904	Sheybân (son of Ahmad)	

III.—SECOND LINE OF GOVERNORS

292 to 323	905 to 934	Thirteen Governors	Partial burning of El-Katâi', 292. Invasion of Egypt by El-Mahdy the Fâtimy, 307.

IV.—HOUSE OF IKHSHÎD

323	934	Mohammad El-Ikhshîd ibn Tukg	Syria again annexed. The kings of this dynasty were buried at Damascus, and have therefore left no tomb-mosques in Egypt.
334	946	Abu-l-Kâsim Ûngûr (son of El-Ikhshîd)	
349	960	Abu-l-Hasan 'Aly son of El-Ikhshîd)	
355	966	Abu-l-Misk Kâfûr, a Eunuch	
357 to 358	968 to 969	Abu-l-Fawâris Ahmad (son of 'Aly)	

V.—FÂTIMY KHALIFS

A.—In Tunis

297	969	El-Mahdy 'Obeyd-Allah	Invades Egypt, 307.
322	934	El-Kâïm Mohammad	
334	945	El-Mansûr Ismâ'îl	
341	952	El-Mu'izz Ma'add	

B.—In Egypt

358	969	„ „	Conquest of Egypt, 358. Syria and part of Arabia annexed. Foundation of El-Kâhira (Cairo). *Mosque El-Azhar*, 359-61. Invasions of the Karmatis.

A.H.	A.D.	Ruler	Events and existing Monuments
365	975	El-'Azīz Nizār	Conversion of the Azhar into a University. *Mosque of El-Hākim*, 380.
386	996	El-Hākim El-Mansūr	Founder of the Druse sect. *Mosque of El-Hākim completed*, 403.
411	1020	Edh-Dhāhir 'Aly	Loss of Aleppo.
427	1035	El-Mustansir Ma'add	Great famine, 7 years long, which caused the desertion and decay of El-Fustāt and other parts of the capital. *Restoration of Mosque of 'Amr*, 441-2. *The 3 great gates and 2nd wall of Cairo built.* Usurpation of Nāsir-ed-daula, 462-5.
487	1094	El-Musta'ly Ahmad	First Crusade; loss of Jerusalem.
495	1101	El-Āmir El-Mansūr	Further losses in Syria.
524	1130	El-Hāfidh' Abd-el-Megīd	Nūr-ed-dīn ibn Zengy makes himself master of Aleppo and Damascus.
544	1149	Edh-Dhāfir Ismā'īl	
549	1154	El-Fāiz 'Isā	
555 to 567	1160 to 1171	El-'Ādid 'Abd-Allah	Nūr-ed-dīn's expeditions to Egypt, 559, 561. Saladin in Egypt, 561. Burning of El-Fustāt, 564, for fifty days, to save its falling into the hands of Amaury, Christian King of Jerusalem.

VI.—HOUSE OF AYYŪB

(Egyptian Branch)

567	1172	En-Nāsir Salāh-ed-din [Saladin] Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb	From 567-9 owns homage to Nūr-ed-dīn. Annexation of Syria, 570. Battle of Hittin, A.D., 1187. Conquest of Jerusalem. *Citadel and 3rd Wall of Cairo.* *Restoration of Mosque of 'Amr.*
589	1193	El-'Azīz 'Imād-ed-din 'Othmān El-Mansūr Mohammad	Resists 4th Crusade, A.D. 1190-3.
595	1198	El-'Ādil Seyf-ed-dīn Abu-Bekr ibn Ayyūb	Re-annexes Syria.
595	1199		
615	1218	El-Kāmil Mohammad	Defeat of Jean de Brienne. *Tomb of Esh-Shāfi'y*, 608. [626. Jerusalem ceded to Frederick II., [St. Louis.
635	1238	El-'Ādil Seyf-ed-dīn Abu-Bekr II.	
637	1240	Es-Sālih Negm-ed-dīn Ayyūb	Jerusalem recaptured. Crusade of *College Es-Sālihiya*, 641. Castle of Er-Rōda.
647	1249	El-Mu'adhdham Tūrān Shāh	Defeat and capture of St. Louis at Mansūra, 647. *Tomb Mosque of Es-Sālih*, 647.
648 to 650	1250 to 1252	El-Ashraf Mūsā (nominally joint king with the Mamlūk Sultān Aybek)	

VII.—THE MAMLŪK SULTĀNS

A.—Bahry or Turkish Line

A.H.	A.D.	Ruler	Events and existing Monuments
648	1250	Queen Sheger-ed-durr	Syria separated.
648	1250	El-Mu'izz 'Izz-ed-dīn Aybek	
655	1257	El-Mansūr Nūr-ed-din 'Aly	
657	1259	El-Mudhaffar Seyf-ed-dīn Kutuz	War with Hūlāgū the Mongol. Syria annexed. Antioch taken.
658	1260	Edh-Dhāhir Rukn-ed-dīn Beybars I.	Campaigns against the Mongols and Christians. *Mosque of Edh-Dhāhir*, 665-7. *Collegiate Mosque Edh-Dhāhirīya*, 660.
676	1277	Es-Sa'īd Nāsir-ed-dīn Baraka-Khān	
678	1279	El-'Adil Bedr-ed-dīn Selāmish	
678	1279	El-Mansūr Seyf-ed-dīn Kalāūn	*Mosque of Kalāūn, Māristān*, 683. Campaign in Syria; sack of Tripoli.
689	1290	El-Ashraf Salāh-ed-dīn Khalīl	Capture of Acre, 690.
693	1293	En-Nāsir Nāsīr-ed-dīn Mohammad. *1st reign*	
694	1294	El-'Ādil Zeyn-ed-dīn Ketbughā	
696	1296	El-Mansūr Husām-ed-dīn Lāgīn	*Restoration of Mosque of Ibn-Tūlūn.*
698	1299	En Nāsir Mohammad. *2nd reign*	Defeat of Mongols in Syria. *Collegiate Mosque En-Nāsirīya*, 698.
708	1309	El-Mudhaffar Rukn-ed-dīn Beybars II. Gāshenkīr.	*Monastic Mosque of Beybars*, 706.
709	1310	En-Nāsir Mohammad. *3rd reign*	*Mosque of En-Nāsir in citadel*, 718. Persecutions of Christians and destruction of churches. *Mosques of the Amīrs Kūsūn*, 730; *El-Māridāny*, 738-40; *Sangar El-Gāwaly and Salār*, 723 ff.
741	1341	El-Mansūr Seyf-ed-dīn Abu-Bekr	
742	1341	El-Ashraf 'Alā-ed-dīn Kūguk	
742	1342	En-Nāsir Shihāb-ed-din Ahmad	
743	1342	Es-Sālih 'Imād-ed-din Ismā'il	
746	1345	El-Kāmil Seyf-ed-dīn Sha'bān	
747	1346	El-Mudhaffar Seyf-ed-dīn Haggy	*Mosque of the Amīr Aksunkur*, 747-8.
748	1347	En-Nāsir Nāsir-ed-din Hasan. *1st reign*	
752	1351	Es-Sālih Salāh-ed-dīn Sālih	
755	1354	En-Nāsir Hasan. *2nd reign*	*Mosque of Sultān Hasan*, 757-60. *Mosques of the Amīr Sheykhū*, 756, and *Suyurghatmish*, 757.
762	1361	El-Mansūr Salāh-ed-dīn Mohammad	
764	1363	El-Ashraf Nāsir-ed-dīn Sha'bān	*Mosque of Umm-Sha'bān.*
778	1377	El-Mansūr 'Alā-ed-dīn 'Aly	
783 to 792	1381 to 1390	Es-Sālih Salāh-ed-dīn Hāggy deposed by Bārkūk 784, 1382, but restored, 791, with new title of El-Mansūr Hāggy, and finally deposed by Barkūk, 792	

B.—Burgy or Circassian Line

A.H.	A.D.	Ruler	Events and existing Monuments
784	1382	Edh-Dhāhir Seyf-ed-dīn Barkūk (interrupted by Hāggy, 791-2)	*Tomb Mosque of Barkūk.* *Collegiate Mosque Barkūkīya*, 786. War with Timūr (Tamerlane).
801	1399	En-Nāsir Nāsir-ed-dīn Farag. *1st reign*	Peace concluded with Timūr.
808	1405	El-Mansūr 'Izz-ed-dīn 'Abd-el-'Aziz	
809	1406	En-Nāsir Farag. *2nd reign*	
815	1412	El-'Adīl El-Musta'īn (the Khalif)	
815	1412	El-Mu'ayyad Sheykh	*Mosque of El Mu'ayyad*, 818-23. Campaigns in Syria.
824	1421	El-Mudhaffar Ahmad	
824	1421	Edh-Dhāhir Seyf-ed-dīn Tatār	
824	1421	Es-Sālih Nāsir-ed-dīn Mohammad	
825	1422	El-Ashraf Seyf-ed-dīn Bars Bey	*Collegiate Mosque El-Ashrafiya*, 827. *Tomb Mosque of Bars Bey.* Expedition against John, King of Cyprus, 827.
842	1438	El-'Aziz Jemāl-ed-dīn Yūsuf	
842	1438	Edh-Dhāhir Seyf-ed-dīn Gakmak	
857	1453	El-Mansūr Fakhr-ed-dīn 'Othmān	
857	1453	El-Ashraf Seyf-ed-dīn Īnāl	
865	1461	El-Mu'ayyad Shihāb-ed-din Ahmad	
865	1461	Edh-Dhāhir Seyf-ed-dīn Khōshkadam	
872	1467	Edh-Dhāhir Seyf-ed-dīn Bilbāy	
872	1467	Edh-Dhāhir Temerbughā	
873	1468	El-Ashraf Seyf-ed-dīn Kāït Bey	*Mosque of Kāït Bey (intra muros).* *Tomb Mosque of Kāït Bey.* *Wekāla of Kāït Bey.* *Mosque of Mazhar El-Ansary.* War with the Ottoman Turks, who were repeatedly defeated.
901	1496	En-Nāsir Mohammad	*Mosque of Khawend in Fayyūm.*
904	1498	Edh-Dhahir Kānsūh	
905	1500	El-Ashraf Gānbalāt	*Mosque of the Amīr Ezbek*, 905.
906	1501	El-Adil Tūmān Bey	
906	1501	El-Ashraf Kānsūh El-Ghūry	*Mosque and Tomb Mosqe, Ghūrīya*, 909. Battle of Marg-Dābik, and defeat of Mamlūks by Selīm I. of Turkey Invasion of Egypt.
922	1516	El-Ashraf Tūmān Bey	Egypt annexed by the Ottoman Sultān Selīm, 1516.

THE PRINCIPAL MOSQUES OF CAIRO

A.D.	
642	*'Amr*, at Old Cairo. Nothing is left of the original building; present mosque in general outline dates from ninth century, but has been frequently restored and altered, the latest and most important restoration being by Murâd Bey in 1798. *See note p.* 303.
878	*Ibn-Tûlûn.* Restored by Lâgîn, 1296.
971	*Azhar.* Restored by Salâr, Suyurghatmish, Sultan Hasan, Kâït Bey, etc. Little of the original work left.
990-1012	*El-Hâkim.* Restored by Beybars II. Gâshenkîr, 1303; and again 1359 and 1423.
1160	*Taldi' ibn Ruzeyk.*
1211	*Esh-Shâfi'y.* Built by El-Kâmil. Often restored.
1249	*Esh-Sâlih.* Restored in fourteenth century.
1268	*Edh-Dhâhir Beybars.*
1284	*Kalaûn, Mâristân.*
1298	*En-Nasir Mohammed*, in the Sûk En-Nahhâsîn.
1306	*Beybars II. Gâshenkîr*, Tekya.
1318	*En-Nasir Mohammed*, in the Citadel.
1323	*Sengar El-Gâwaly* and *Salâr.*
1338	*El-Mâridâny.*
1347	*Aksunkur.* Restored by Ibrahîm Aga, 1652.
1355	*Sheykhû.*
1356	*Suyurghatmish.*
1358	*Sultan Hasan.*
1368	*Umm Sha'bân.*
1384	*Barkûk*, in the Sûk En-Nahhâsîn.
1405-10	*Barkûk*, in the Eastern Cemetery.
1420	*El-Muâyyad.* Now under restoration.
1423	*El-Ashraf Bars Bey*, in the Eastern Cemetery.
1456	*El-Ashraf Inâl*, in the Eastern Cemetery.
1472	*Kâït Bey*, in the Eastern Cemetery, and within Cairo.
1481	*Amîr Akhor Kigmâs.*
1497	*Abu-Bekr Mazhar El-Ansary.*
1499	*Ezbek.*
1503	*El-Ghûry.* Two mosques; one restored 1883.

INDEX

Cross references are printed in *italics*, and enclosed in square brackets [ ]

'Abbâs Pasha, 18
'Abda, Fâtimy Princess, 65
'Abdallah ibn Tâhir, 304
'Abd-el 'Azîz ibn Marwân, 303
'Abd-el-Latîf, 233-6
Abu-Sarga, church, 219
Abu-s-Seyfeyn, church, 210
Abu-Zeyd, romance, 170
Abydos, 260-5
Accountants, Coptic, 205, 273-5
Acre, sculptured door from, 34
Adân (call to prayer), 195
'Adil, El-, Seyf-ed-dîn, 68, 312
Agriculture, 233-246
Agriculture, colleges, 188
Akhôr [*Amîr*]
Aksunkur, mosque, 58
Alabaster mosque (Mohammed 'Aly's), 18
'Alam [*Amîr*]
'Almas, singers, 159
Altars, Coptic, 217-8
'Aly the Khalif's wives, 137
Amasis, 226
Amaury, 44
Ambon, or Coptic pulpit, 219-20
Amîr (lord): Amîr Akhor, 88; Amîr 'Alam, 83, 88; Amîr Bâbdâr, 90; Amîr El-Kebir, 88; Amîr Meglis, 88; Amîr Shikâr, 88; Amîr Tabar, 88
'Amr ibu El-' Asy, 4, 31, 62; mosque, 44-8; note on Mr. Corbett's researches, 303-4; *woodcuts*, 45, 47, 49
Amusements, 92-5
Anchorites, 93, 203, 260
Antar romance, 170
Antony, St., monastery, 210
Anubis, 230
Apis, 230-32
Aqueduct, 20; *woodcut*, 87
Arab art, 38-44, 99-118, 303-317
Arab conquest of Egypt, 4
Arabian Nights, 1, 2, 92
Arch, pointed, 22
Archery, 92
Architects, Christian, 20
Architecture, Byzantine, 22; Saracenic or Arab, 38-44; Turkish, 34
Ark in Coptic church, 218
Armourers' market, 15; *woodcut*, 16
Army of the Mamlûks, 84-6
Arsinoë, 209, 210
Artisans, 275-6
'Arûsa (bride), 30
Ascetics, 93, 203, 260
Ashraf, El-, Bars Bey, Mamlûk Sultan, mosque, 36; tomb-mosque, 38; *woodcut*, 37
Ashrafy Mamlûks, 76
Ashûra (Tenth Day of Moharram), 168
Askar, El-, suburb, 4
Aswân, 244
Asyût, 244, 258-60, 275; *woodcuts*, 257, 259, 275, 276
Atâbek El-Asâkir, 88
Aybek, 70, 304
Aydekîn, 86
Ayyûby dynasty, 66, 311
'Azab [*Bâb*]
Azhar mosque and university, 6, 33, 38, 65, 184-8
'Azîz, El-, son of Saladin, 224
Azulejo, 116
Azzimina, 317

Bâb (gate): Bâb El-'Azab, 15; Bâb

El-Bahr, 7; Bâb El-Futûh, 7; Bâb El-Ghurayib, 8, 38; Bâb El-Khalak, 7; Bâb El-Lûk, 7; Bâb En-Nasr, 7, 80, 92; *woodcut*, 5; Bâb Sitta Nefisa, 64; Bâb Zuweyla, 7, 36, 77, 125
Bâbdar [*Amîr*]
Babylon, Christian:—The Christian domination in Egypt, 202-3; Europe's debt to the Egyptian monks, 203; the Coptic Church, 204-5; Copts the scriveners and accountants of Egypt, 205; they represent most closely the ancient Egyptians in feature and language, 205-6; character of the Copts, 206-7; their history little known, 208; Coptic monasteries, 209-10; Babylon signifies Gate of On or Heliopolis, 212; Heliopolis, 212-14; the Virgin's Tree, 213; the fortress of Babylon, 214; Coptic churches within the fortress, 216-20; plan, furniture, decoration, and vessels of a Coptic church, 216-19; church of Abu-Sarga, 219; Holy Family, 219; Church of St. Barbara and the Mu'allaka, 219-20
Bahr [*Bâb*]
Ballâsa, 275
Balliâna, 210
Balsam trees, 213
Banquets, 153
Baraka, Ilkhân of Persia, 87
Barbara, St., church, 219
Barbers, *woodcut*, 251
Baring, Sir E. (Baron Cromer), 190, 236, 240, 242, 243, 274, 298
Barkûk, Mamlûk Sultan, mosque, 33; tomb-mosque, 38, *woodcut*, frontispiece; stone pulpit, 60; lamps, 112
Barrage, 242
Bars Bey [*Ashraf*]
Bashmakdâr (Lord of the Slipper), 58
Bathroom, 134; public baths, 140
Bazar (Sûk, or market), 12
Beacon, Castle of (Babylon), 214
Beauty, Arabian ideal of, 142-4
Bedawis 281; *woodcuts*, 279, 280, 284-5
Bedr-el-Gemâly, Fâtimy Vizîr, 6
Bedrooms, 134
Bendocquedar, 86
Beny Suweyf, 18
Berchem, Max van, 40
Bernal Collection, 114
Betrothal, 160-2
Beybars, Mamlûk Sultan, 68; his work, correspondence, letter to Boemond, army, government, biography, court and household, state progresses, etc., sports, 83-92
Beyn-el-Kasreyn, street, 6
Beysary, Amîr, 79, 95, 303-6
Bibba, 210
Bilbeys, 44
Birket El-Hâgg, 168
Birthday of the Prophet (Môlid En-Neby), 170
Bismi-llâh before meals, 149
Boemond, Prince of Antioch, 83-4
Borâk, 176
Boulevard Mohammed 'Aly, 8
Bowwâb (door-keeper), 130
Brasswork, 106-10, 114, 118, 133
Brazier, 133
Bridal festivities, 163
Bride of the Nile, 30
Brienne, Jean de, 68
Bronze-plated doors, 58
Buffalo, *woodcut*, 235
Bûlâk, 31; Museum, 98, 222; Môlid, 172; *woodcut*, 169
Bull, sacred, 230-2
Bundukdâr, 86
Butler, A. J., *Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, 217
Byzantine architecture, 22

Café, *woodcut*, 155
Cairene:—upper classes Europeanised, 119; lower classes conservative and unchanged, 119; the Cairo shopkeeper, 120; his shop, 120; way of conducting business, 120-122; refreshments offered, 120; the passing scene, 123; bargaining, 123-4; the shop-keeper's home, 124; in a private street, 124; meshrebîya windows, 126, 128; entrance to the private house, 129; door, 129; lock and key, 130; the courtyard, 130; men's rooms, 130; guest-room, 132; its construction and furniture, 132; the harîm or women's apartments, 133; kâ'a or drawing-room, 134; bedrooms, 134; bathroom, 134; private life of the master, 134-7; and of the women, 137-140; polygamy rare in Cairo, 137; divorce frequent, 137; want of education among women, 140; feminine beauty, 142; ideal of the poets, 142-4; Greek girls, 144; women despised by Mohammed and Mohammedans, 145; the Devil's opinion, 145; the position of women a fatal blot on the Mohammedan social system, 146;

pernicious bringing up of girls, 146; want of women's influence in Eastern life, 147; no remedy whilst modern Islâm prevails, 147-8; *woodcuts*, 121-3
Cairo, the city of the Arabian Nights, 1, 2; the Jewish Physician's eulogy, 4; its growth, 4-6; its three walls, 6-7; size, 6; present remains, 6-7; topography, 8, 9; *plan*, xv.; private houses, 10; bazars and shops, 12; Citadel, 15, 18; quarter of Ibn-Tûlûn, 20-24; the canal, 24, 26; rise of the Nile, and cutting of the dam of the canal, 27-32; mosques, 33-61; kings, governors, and sultans, 62-97; the museum of Arab Art, 98-118; the Mohammedan inhabitants, 119-148; their amusements in the Middle Ages and to-day, 149-179; orgies, 153-9; weddings, 160-7; festivals, 167, 179; education, 180-190; religion, 190-201; the Christians or Copts, 202-220; the fellâhîn or country-folk, 223-81.
Camp of Beybars, 90
Canal of Cairo (Khalîg), 24, 26-32; *woodcuts*, 25, 29; Isma'îliya, 7; Mahmûdiya, 236; Freshwater, *woodcut*, 237
Canalisation of Egypt, 234-243
Canarison of Mamlûk charger, 89
Carpet, holy (Kiswa), 176
Carpet bazar, 14, 75, 174, *woodcut*, 13
Carvings, 58, 60, 108, 110
Castle of the Beacon (Babylon), 214
Cathedral, Coptic, 219
Ceilings, decorated, 133
Cemetery, Eastern, or of Kâït Bey, 36-8
Censers, 95
Chalice, 218
Chandeliers, 112; *woodcuts*, 113, 117
Christian architects, 20
Christianity in Egypt, 202-220; superstition, 254; Holy Family, 213, 219, 260
Church, Coptic, 204-220
Citadel of Cairo, 6, 7, 15, 18, 66, 76, 80; dungeon, 82; *woodcut*, 19, 67
Clarke, C. Purdon, 116
Clarke, F. S., Report on Egypt, 190, 236, 298
Clerks, Coptic, 205, 208, 273-5
Cloisters in mosques, 38
Coffee, 119, 122, 166
Collections of Arab Art [*Bernal, Clarke, Maurice, Meymar, Lane-Poole*]
Colleges of Agriculture, Medicine, Engineering, &c., 188
Commission for the Preservation of the Monuments of Arab Art, 104-6, 112
Committee of Council on Education, 116
Concubinage, 137
Conquest of Egypt by the Arabs, 4
Conscription, 242
Convents and monasteries [*Arsinoe, Babylon, Ballidna, Bibba, Deyr-El-Benât, Fayyûm, Khârga, John, Monastery, Monks, Negâda, Nitrian, Oxyrhyncus, Paul, Pulley, Philae, Suhâg*]
Cooper, C., 190
Coppersmith's bazar (Sûk En-Nahhâsîn), 6, 8, 33-6, 60
Copts, 202-220, 260; Coptic Church, 204-6; worship, 220; language, 206; history, 203-6; art, 112, 218; secretaries, scribes, and accountants, 205, 208, 273-5
Corbett, E. K., 44, 203-4
Correspondence of Mamlûks, 83
Corvée, or forced labour, 34, 236, 241-2, 294, 296, 297
Courbash [*Kurbâg*]
Courtyard of house, 130
Credo (Kelima), 183
Cromer, Lord [*Baring*]
Crusades, 66, 70
Culs-de-sac, 126
Cumbdach, 218
Curzon, R. (Lord Zouche), 210

Dam of Canal, cutting of, 28-32
Damascus pottery and tiles, 100, 116, 219; room, 116
Damietta, 244; carved doors, 110
Dancing girls, 142
Dâr-el-'Adl (Hall of Justice), 6
Delhema, romance, 170
Delta, 233; towns, 244
Dervishes, 93, 159, 168, 174, 175
Deyr El-Bahry, 268
Deyr, El-Benât (Convent of the Maidens), 210
Dinner, Arab, 149
Disert Ulidh, 203
Dishes, Arab, 149
Divans, 132, 133
Divorce, 137
Dôm palm, *woodcut*, 263
Dome, 42, 54; in Coptic churches, 216
Donkeys, 93, 122-3, 136, 140
Donkey boy, *woodcut*, 139
Door of a private house, 129, 131, 141, 191; *woodcut*, 129
Door of a mosque, 53; *woodcut*, 41, 51, 111; door from Acre; bronze-plated, 58; from Damietta, 110

Door-keeper, 90, 130; *woodcut*, 135
Dôsa, ceremony of the, 170
Dowry, 162
Drinking, 94, 153-6
Drop, Night of the, 178
Dufferin, Marquess of, 238, 242
Dyer of Baghdâd's wives, 137

Education, secular and spiritual:—educational standard generally low, 180; chiefly theological studies, 180; training of Egyptian children, 180-183; manners carefully cultivated, 182; parental influence, 182; religious training, 183-8; schools, 183; Korân taught by rote, 183; the schoolmaster, 184; the Azhar University, 184-8; European reform of education in Egypt, 188-90; statistics, 189; education of women, 146-8; the religion of Islam, its theism, and apostolic doctrine, 190-5; prayers, Friday service, fast of Ramadân, 195-200; religious performances, zikrs and khâtmas, 200-201
Edwards, A. B., 258, 260
Egypt, ancient civilisation, 221-3; conquest by Arabs, 4; by Fâtimis, 65; the peasantry and working classes, 72, 119-20, 275-81; English reforms, 282-302
Elephantine, *woodcut*, 287
Engineering, college, 188
England's work in Egypt:—European innovations, 282-8; the ex-Khedive Isma'îl's reforms, 289-92; English administration, 292; two pictures—Egypt in 1882, 294-6; Egypt in 1892, 296-8; results and anticipations, 300, 302
Epiphany tank, 217
Esnê, 244, 275
Eucharist in Coptic church, 218, 220
Eudoxus, 212, 230
Eutyches, 204
Eye of the Needle (Mosque of 'Amr), 48-9
Ezbekîya, 7, 8, 170; *woodcut*, 9

Falconry, 91
Farming, 233, 46
Fasting, 199; of Copts, 220
Fâtiha (first chap. of Korân), 162, 196
Fâtimy Khalifs, conquest of Egypt, 4, 65; palace of Kâhira, 4-5; monuments, 33, 65; wealth, 65; princesses, 65; art, 307-9
Fayyûm, 210, 258
Fellâhîn or peasantry:—Egypt essentially an agricultural country, 233; fertility, 233-4; cheap farming, 233; annual inundation of the Nile, 234; irrigation, 234-43; *corvée*, or forced labour, 236; native pumps, shadûfs, sâkiyas, 238-40; reforms under English administration, 240-4; abolition of the corvée and courbash, 241-2; taxation, 242; Sir C. Scott Moncrieff's irrigation works, 242, and roads, 243; peasantry from the bulk of the population, 244; meaning of the word *fellâhîn*, 244; advantages of the Egyptian cultivator, 244-6; character of the fellâh, 246; villages, 247-52; local saints and their miracles, 252-6; country towns, 256-60; Minya, 256; Asyût, 258-60; Girga, 260; Abydos, 262; myth of Osiris and Isis, 264-5; Thebes, 265-73; a country law-court, 273; Coptic clerks, 273-4; industries, 275; life of the artisan, 276; meals, 276-8; peasant women, 279-81; amusements, 281; *woodcuts*, 238, 240, 241, 245-53, 255, 257, 259, 261, 263, 267, 275, 276
Festivals and festivities, 160-178
Flabellum in Coptic church, 218
Food, Arab, 65, 89, 149, 278
Fortress, Roman, of Babylon, 214
Fountain in mosque for ablution, 24; in houses, 122; in street, 183; *woodcut*, 181
Friday (Sabbath), 199
Fum El-Khalîg, 27
Fustât, foundation of, 4, 20; destruction, 6, 304; 27, 31, 44
Futûh [*Bdb*]

Gabarty, El-, 166, 304
Gamakdâr (Mace-bearer), 90
Gamdâr (Master of the Wardrobe), 88
Gardens, 26; hanging, 220
Gâshenkîr (Taster), 88
Gates:—of Victory, 7, 50, 80; of Conquests, 7, 8, 33, 50; Watergate, 7 [*Bdb*]
Gauhar's conquest of Egypt, and foundation of the palace of Kâhira or Cairo, 4
Gemalîya bazar, 14
George, St., Greek Church of, 219
Germanicus, 230
Ghâshia or State Housings, 89
Ghawâzy or dancing girls, 142
Ghurayib [*Bdb*]

Ghûrîya street, 8, 36, 120, 122, 124
Ghûry, El-, Mamlûk Sultan, mosques of, 36; tomb-mosque, 38; bronze lamp, 112
Gibb, E. J. W., *Ottoman Poems*, 144
Ginn (genii), 93, 226
Girga, 260; *woodcut*, 261
Gîza (formerly Bûlâk) Museum, 98, 222; pyramids, 221-9
Glass in windows and lamps, 60, 112-114
Government in 1882 and 1892, 294-302
Governors under the Khalifs, 4, 62, 65
Gubba, 89
Guestroom, 132
Gûkandâr (polo-master), 88

Hâgg, Birket El-, 168
Hâkim, El-, Fâtimy Khalif, mosque, 20, 33, 48-50, 65, 106, 304; *woodcut*, 35
Halbet El-Kumeyt (Race of the Ruby), 154, 159
Hammâd, the poet, 155-6
Hamrâ, El-, 258
Hanafîya (tank for ablutions before prayers), 45; *woodcut*, 53
Hârat Ibn-Tûlûn, 20
Harim rooms, 133-4; beauties, 142-4
Harûn er-Rashîd, Khalif, 152, 156, 158
Hasan, Sultan Mamlûk, mosque, 15, 36, 50-53, 58; lamps, 112; *woodcuts*, 52, 53
Hasaneyn, mosque, 38, 168; festival, 172-6
Hawâig-Khânâh (Royal Larder), 89
Hawking, 91
Helena, Empress, 210
Heliopolis, 212-3
Henna stain, 144
Hermits, 93, 203, 260
Herodotus, 212, 223
Higâz, 65
Hishâm, Khalif, 155-6
Holy Family, 213, 219
Horns, 264
Hoseyn, the martyr, 38; festival, 168, 172
House, private, 124-134; *woodcut*, 11; huts of peasants, 247-52
Household of Mamlûk Sultan, 88-9

Ibn-Tûlûn [*Tûlûn*]
Ibrahîm Aga, 58
'Id El-Kebîr, 177
'Id Es-Saghîr, 176
Ikhshîdy dynasty, 4, 65
Illuminated texts, 216, 217
Illuminations and bazars, 174
Imâm (precentor), 199
Industries, 275
Inlaid panelled wood-work, 112, 116; ivory, 220; silverwork, 108, 116, 303-317
Inscriptions [*Kufic, Naskhy*]
Instruction, Ministry of Public, 188-190
Ireland, influence of Egyptian works in, 203; Irish art, 203; churches, 216
Irrigation, 234-43
Isis, 264
Islâm, the religion of Egypt, 190-201
Isma'îlîya Canal, 7
Ivory work, 220

Jacobites, 204, 214
Jerusalem taken by Saladin, 66
John, convent of St., 210
Joinville, 90-1
Joseph's Hall, 68; well, 18

Kâ'a (reception-room), 134
Kaaba, 176
Kâdy, 162; court of, 172
Kâfûr (Vizîr of Tulûnis), 65
Kahwejy, 166
Kâït Bey, Mamlûk Sultan, mosques, 53; medallion, 53; wekâla, 14, 54; *woodcut*, 54; tomb-mosque, 38, 54; mosque *intra muros*, 55-6; pulpit, 60, 116; cemetery, 36, 38; metal-work, 316; *woodcuts*, 39, 40, 41, 55, 57, 187, 316
Kal'at El-Kebsh, 48, 168
Kalaûn, Mamlûk Sultan, mosque of, 33; Mâristân, 34; schools, 36; healing virtues, 36, 75, 78, 108; art, 313
Kamarîyas (windows), 60, 116
Kâmil, El-, 68
Kana wood, 87
Karâfa, cemetery, 20
Karâkûsh, Vizîr of Saladin, 68
Kasr Esh-Shem'a street, 214
Kasr Yûsuf, 68
Kasreyn, Beyn El-, 6
Katâi', El-, suburb, 4, 6, 7, 20, 62
Kebîr [*Amîr*]
Kelima (credo), 183
Kemenga, 159
Ketbughâ, Mamlûk Sultân, 75-80
Khalak [*Bâb*]
Khalifs:—'Aly, 137; 'Omar, 31; Yezîd, 144; Hishâm, 155-6; El-Mahdy, 154; Harûn Er-Rashîd, 152, 156, 158; Khalifs' poetry, 153,

154, 176; Khalif of Baghdâd acknowledged in Cairo, 66
Khalîg (canal of Cairo), 24, 26, 32; *woodcuts*, 25, 29
Khalîl, Mamlûk Sultan, 75, 76, 78
Khân (hostelry), 14
Khan El-Khalîly, 14, 75, 174; *woodcut*, 13
Khârga, Oasis of El-, 210
Khatîb (preacher), 199
Khâtiba (betrother), 160
Khâtma (recital of Korân), 201
Khawend Umm Anûk, tomb, 38
Khumâraweyh ibn Ahmad ibn Tûlûn, 64
Khwârism sandals, 87
Kibla (point towards Mekka), 42, 46
Kinê, 275
Kipchak, Beybar's birthplace, 86
Kiswa (holy carpet), 176
Kléber, 212
Klunziger, C. B., *Upper Egypt*, 250, 278
Kohl, 143
Kôm Es-Sultân, 264
Kôm Ombo, *woodcut*, 277
Korân, 162, 183, 304 [*Islâm*]
Kubba, or tomb, of a local saint, 254
Kufic inscriptions, 7, 22, 33, 42, 50, 52, 117; *woodcut*, 99
Kulla, or gulla, 126, 275
Kurbâg (courbash), 46, 242, 294
Kursy (Table), 106-110; *woodcuts*, 101, 103, 105, 107, 109
Kûsûn, mosque, 104
Kutb [*Mutawelly*]

Labour, forced, 34
Lâgîn, Mamlûk Sultan, reign and character, 77-82; restoration of the mosque of Ibn-Tûlûn, 80-81; wars in Armenia, 81; private life, 81; murder, 82
Lamps, enamelled glass, 60, 112-114; *woodcut*, 115
Lamp-seller, *woodcut*, 3
Lance-practice, 92
Lane, E. W., 1; *Arabian Society*, 144, 159, 167; *Modern Egyptians*, 30, 119, 136
Lane-Poole, S., works cited:—
Art of the Saracens, 38, 81, 100
Egypt, 8, 229
Speeches and Table-talk of the Prophet Mohammad, 130, 190
Studies in a Mosque, 168, 172, 195
Lane-Poole, collection of Arab art acquired by, 116-118
Lattice work, 10, 108, 116, 117, 126, 132
Law court, Sultan's, 83; country, 273-4; reformed, 296-7
Lectern, Coptic, 218
Lepsius, 228
Letters, Mamlûk, 83
Liwân, or sanctuary of a mosque, 24, 42, 45, 50, 52, 56, 58
Loreley of Egyptian legend, 226
Louis, St., crusade, 70
Lûk [*Bâb*]
Lulu, 307
Luxor, 244
Lycopolis, 260

Mahdy, El-, Khalif, verses, 154
Mahmal, 177
Maidens, convent of the, 210
Makrizy, El-, *Topography of Cairo*, 50, 72, 92, 203, 304, 317
Mamlûks, tombs of, 20; buildings, 34; origin of the name, 68; their rise to power, Sheger-ed-durr and Aybek, 70; external history and embassies, 70; art, 70, 72; Mamlûks and peasantry distinct classes, 72; Tartar blood, 72; Mamlûk amîrs or lords, 73, 303 ff.; bodyguard, 73; struggles for the succession, 73; En-Nâsir, Ketbughâ, and reign of Lâgîn, 75-82; Mamlûk titles, 76; a Mamlûk sultan's duties, judgeship, correspondence, 83; officers of the court, 88-9; state progress, 89-90; camp, 90; sport, falconry, archery, polo, 92; society, 92; superstitions, 93; drinking revels, 94-95; massacre by Mohammed 'Aly, 15
Mandara (guest-room), 132
Mansûra, El-, battle and city, 68, 86, 244
Manufactures, 275
Marble decoration, 42
Marghûsh, 14
Mariette, 222, 232
Mâristân, 34
Maslama, 203
Masr, native name for Egypt and for its capital, 4
Masr El-' Atîka (old Cairo), 6, 27, 31, 44; *woodcut*, 63
Matarîya, battle of, 212
Maurice, M. de St., Collection, 112, 116
Medallion of Kâit Bey, 53
Medicine, college, 188
Medresa, 40
Meglis [*Amîr*]
Melekites, 204, 214

Memphis:—antiquity of the Egyptian civilisation, 221-2; Menes founds Memphis, 223; mediaeval vandalism, 224; the Red Pyramid, 226; Rhodôpis, 226; a pyramid is a royal cairn, 228; necropolis of Memphis and Sakkara, 229; picture tombs, 229; Serapeum, 230; the bull Apis, 230; his burial place, 230-2; *woodcut*, 225
Menes, 223, 262
Meshrebîya, 10, 180, 116-17, 126, 132
Metalwork, 58, 106-110, 133, 303-317
Meydân (racecourse), 62
Meymar Collection, 115
Mibkhara, 50
Mihrâb, niche of a mosque, 42, 58, 108; *woodcuts*, 33, 59
Minarets of Ibn-Tûlûn, 24; of El-Hâkim, 20, 33, 50; of Sultan Hasan, 53; of El-Muayyad, 7, 36, 42; of Kâït Bey, 55-6
Minbar [*Pulpit*]
Minya, 244, 256; *woodcut*, 255
Miracles and cures, 36, 70, 124, 126, 170, 218, 252-6
Mishkât El-Masâbîh, 195
Mohammed the Prophet, 194-5 [*Islâm*]; feast-day (Môlid En-Neby), 170; views of women, 145; on music, 159
Mohammed 'Aly, massacre of Mamlûks, 15, 68; bombardment of Citadel, 18; mosque, 18; *woodcut*, 96; educational reforms, 188; boulevard, 8; canal, 236
Mohammedan religion, 190-201
Moharram festival, 167
Mo'izz, El-, Fâtimy, Khalif, 4, 65-6
Môlids or religious festivals, 167-78; Môlid En-Neby, 170
Monastery, White, 210
Moncrieff, Sir Colin Scott-, 242
Monks, Egyptian, in England and Ireland, 203
Môsil metalwork, 306 ff.
Mosques, 38-44, 56-61; of Aksunkur, 58; 'Amr, 44-8, 203-4; El-Ashraf Bars Bey, 36, 38; Azhar, 6, 33, 38, 65, 184-8; Barkûk, 33, 38; Beybars, 66; El-Ghûry, 36, 38; El-Hâkim, 20, 33, 48-50, 65, 106; Sultan Hasan, 15, 36, 50-53, 58; Hasaneyn, 38, 168; Kâït Bey, 38, 53-6; Kalaûn, 33-4, 36; Kûsûn, 104; Mohammed 'Aly, 18; El-Muayyad, 7, 20, 36, 42, 124; En-Nâsir, 18, 33-4, 108; Sitta Nefîsa, 58, 108; Sitta Rukeyya, 110; Es-Sâlih, 60; Esh-Shâfi'y, 175; Ibn-Tûlûn, 7, 20-4, 48
Mo'tezz, El-, Post-Khalif, verses, 153, 176
Mother-of-pearl decoration, 42
Mu'allaka Church, 219-20
Muayyad, El-, Mamlûk Sultan, mosque of, 7, 20, 36, 42, 124
Mudîrs, 294
Mueddin (or muezzin, summoner to prayer), 42, 45
Mukattam, Mount, 6, 15; *woodcut*, 69
Mukhârik, the singer, 156-9
Murâd Bey, 304
Museum, British, 60, 114, 118, 168, 305-317
Museum of Arab Art, 50, 58, 60, 98-118
Museum of Gîza (formerly of Bûlâk), 98, 222
Museum, South Kensington, 60, 81, 112, 114-118, 305-317
Music, 95, 154-9
Mûsik, Amîr, 8
Musky street, 8, 36
Mustansir, El-, Fâtimy Khalif, 6, 308
Mutawelly, Gate [*Zuweyla*]
Mutawelly, El-, Kutb, 124

NÂIB ES-SALTANA (Viceroy), 78
Narthex, 217
Nasr [*Bâb*]
Nâsir, En-, Mohammed, Mamlûk Sultan, mosque in citadel, 18, 108; in Nahhâsîn, 33, 34; lavish expenditure in building, 34; his wife's tomb, 38; his reign, 75-80; table, 108; art, 314
Nâsir-i Khusrau, traveller, 93
Naskhy inscriptions, 108
Nauba (guard) [*Ras-Nauba*]
Nebbût (staff), 139, 253
Nefîsa, Sitta, Gate, 54; mihrâb or niche, 58, 108; *woodcut*, 59
Nesbitt, E., 114
Neenâs, 93
Niche of mosque, 42, 58, 108; *woodcuts*, 33, 59
Night of the Drop, 178
Nile, channel diverted by Menes, 223; change of bed, 7; rise, 27; inundation, 234; cutting the dam of the canal, 27-32; the Bride, 30; *woodcuts*, 21, 266, 271, 277, 287
Nilometer, 27
Nitocris, Queen, confused with Rhodôpis, 226
Nitrian monasteries, 210
Norman-like architecture, 7, 18

Nuns, Coptic, 210
Nûr-ed-dîn, 66

Obelisk of Heliopolis, 212
Old Cairo (Fustât or Masr El-' Atîka), 6, 27, 31, 44; *woodcut*, 63
Oliphant, Laurence, *Land of Khemi*, 275
'Omar, Khalif, 31
On, or Heliopolis, 212-3
Onias, 213
Ophthalmia, 252
Osiris, 260-5
'Othmân's Korân, 87
Oxyrhyncus, 210
Ozymandias, 273

Palaces of the Fâtimis, 4-5; of the Mamlûks, 95; of Tûlûny dynasty, 62, 64
Palmer, E. H., *Poems of Zuheyr*, 26, 92
Parasol of State, 89
Passion Play, Persian, 38
Paul, St., monastery, 210
Peasantry, 72 [*Fellâhîn*]
Perfumes, 95
Persia, Ilkhân of, 87
Persian engravers, 107, 309
Philae, Christian church at, 202; Osiris myth, 264
Pictures in Coptic churches, 216, 217, 218
Pigeon post, 83
Pigeon towers, 250; *woodcut*, 250
Pilgrims, return of, 168
Planets, 309, 312
Plato, 212
Plough, 244-5
Poets, 154-9
Polo, 92
Polo, Marco, 84, 86
Polygamy, 137 [*Women*]
Poole, R. S., *Cities of Egypt*, 214
Poole, S. Lane [*Lane-Poole*]
Porter, *woodcut*, 159
Pottery, Damascus, 100, 116, 219; Asyût, *woodcuts*, 275-6
Prayer, call to (Adân), 45
Prayers, Mohammedan, 195-9; *woodcut*, 193, 197
Progresses, royal, 70, 89, 90
Prophetic mission, doctrine of, 194-5
Ptah, temple of, 224, 230
Pulley, convent of the, 210
Pulpit or *minbar*, 42; Kâït Bey's, 60; of Lagîn, 81, Coptic, 219, 220
Pump, steam, 240
Pyramids, 20, 21, 66, 221; astounding antiquity of the Egyptian civilisation, 221-3; Memphis 223-4; despoilers of Memphis and the Pyramids, 224-6; the Red Pyramid and the legend of Rhodôpis, 226; a pyramid a gigantic cairn, 228-9; *woodcuts*, 227, 231

Quicksilver bed, 64

Ra, 212
Rabâb (viol) players, *woodcut*, 157
Racing, 92
Raki, 246
Ramadân, 176, 199-200
Rameses II., 264, 268, 272-3
Râs Nauba (Captain of the Guard), 88
Rashîd [*Hârûn*]
Râshida, Fâtimy Princess, 65
Recluses, Christian, 203
Rek'a of prayer, 196
Relics, miracles, and cures, 36, 70, 124, 126, 170, 218, 252-6
Rent, 233, 242-3, 296
Revels of Islâm, 95; a Cairene dinner, 149; mode of eating, 149-52; Arab dishes, 152; revels of the "Golden Prime," wine, perfume, prodigious banquets, music, wit, 153-4; love of poetry and song, 154-9; Hammâd, Ibrahîm El-Môsily, Mukhârik, 155-9; the 'Almas, dancing girls, clowns, 159-60; Egyptian weddings, 160-7; religious festivals, 167-178; the Moharram Festival, 167-8; Persian Passion Play, 168; return of the Pilgrims, 168; Feast of the Prophet, 170; Feast of the Hasaneyn, 172-5; Procession of the Holy Carpet of Kiswa, 176-7; various festivals, 175-9
Rhodian Pottery, 58, 100, 116, 219
Rhodôpis, Greek mistress of Amasis, 226
Riwâks in the Azhar, 114
Roads, 243
Rôda Island, 27; *woodcut*, 31
Rogers, E. T., and Miss, 48, 53, 56
Roman walls and towers, 214
Romancers, 170; *woodcut*, 157
Rosetta, 244
Rufinus, 209-10
Rukeyya, Sitta, niche from tomb, 110

Sâc wood, 64
Sa'îd, Ibn, 304
Saints, local, 252-6; tomb of, *woodcut*, 255

Sa'is (running footman), 136-37; *woodcut*, 138
Sâkiya (water-wheel), 238-40
Sakka (water-carrier), *woodcut*, 151
Sakkara, pyramids and tombs, 229; *woodcut*, 227
Sâky, 88
Saladin (Salâh-ed-dîn), 6, 15, 44, 66, 68, 303, 311
Salîba street, 24, 168
Sâlih, Es-, Ayyûb, Ayyûby Sultan, 48; carved tomb, 60; his Mamlûk guard, 68-70; his slave Beybars, 86; his secretary, Zuheyr, 94
Sanctuary of mosque, 2 [*Liwân*]
Saphedin, 68 [*'Adil*]
Saracenic Art, 38-44, 99-118
Sarga, Abu-, Church, 219
Schools, 183; *woodcut*, 185, 187; reformed, 189; of Mâristân, 36
Screens, Coptic, 217, 219, 220
Scribes, Coptic, 205, 208, 273-5
Sebîl, or street fountain, 183; *woodcut*, 181
Serapeum, 230
Sergius, St., church, 219
Seti, 262
Seyfeyn, Abu-s-, church, 210
Shadûf, 238-40; *woodcuts*, 239, 241
Shâfi'y, Imâm Esh- (mosque), 175; *woodcut*, 177
Sharâb-Khânâh (Buttery Royal), 89
Sheger-ed-durr, Mamlûk Queen, 70, 177
Sheykh, village, 252; *woodcut*, 248
Shikâr [*Amîr*]
Shoe Bazar, *woodcut*, 17
Shops, 10, 12, 14, 15; *woodcuts*, 12, 14
Shopkeeper, *woodcut*, 121
Shugâ', 307
Shugay, 76
Silâhdâr (Grand Armourer), 88
Singers, 95, 159
Silverwork, 303-317
Siout [*Asyût*]
Slavery, 296, 298
Sport among the Mamlûks, 91-2
State progresses, &c., 79, 89, 90
Stephen, St., Church at Philae, 202
Streets of Cairo, 6, 8, 15, 26, 33-6, 60, 124; *woodcuts*, 125, 127, 165
Street fights under the Mamlûks, 75
Sûdân trade, 15, 48
Sugar bazar, 8, 15
Suhâg, 210
Sûk (bazar, market), 12
Sûk En-Nahhâsin (Coppersmith's bazar), 6, 8, 33-6, 60
Sûk Es-Sellâh (Armourers' market), 15
Sukkariya street, 8, 15
Suweyf, Beny, 18

Tabar [*Amîr*]
Tabardâr (Halberdier), 88, 90
Tabl-Khânâh (Royal Drummery), 88
Tables inlaid and chased, 106-110; *woodcuts*, 101, 103, 105, 107, 109
Tanta, 244
Taufik, Khedive, 137, 298
Taxation, 233, 242-3, 296-7
Tekbîr, 196
Textus case, 218
Thebes, 265-73; *woodcuts*, 267, 269
Theodore, Abbot, 202-3
Theodosius, edict of, 203
Thinis or This, 223, 260-5
Thousand and One Nights, 1, 2, 92
Tisht-Khânâh (Royal Vestiary), 89, 312
Tiles, Damascus, 219
Titles of Mamlûks, 76, footnote
Tombs, ancient Egyptian, 228-32, 272-3; at Asyût, 258-60; of the Khalifs, 38; of the Mamlûks, 20; *woodcuts*, 71, 74, 77, 78, 79; of local saints, 254; *woodcuts*, 255
Tombs, visiting the, 176, 201, 207; *woodcuts*, 91, 93
Town, provincial, 256-64
Tughra, 176
Tûlûn, Ahmad ibn, 4; his mosque, 7, 20, 24, 48; his history and palace, &c., 62; other works of his dynasty, 62-64; quarter (Hârat), 20; *woodcuts*, 22, 23
Tura quarries, 229
Turkish architecture, 34
Typhon, 264

Ulamâ, 186, 188
Umm Anûk, wife of En-Nâsir, 38
University of Cairo, the Azhar, 184-8
Ustaddâr (Major Domo), 88
Ustaddâr Es-Suhba (Superintendent of the Kitchen), 88
Usurers, village, 242

Vandalism of modern Egyptians and travellers, 103; of earlier ages, 224
Veils, 140, 142
Venetian Saracenic work, 114
Villages, 247-52; *woodcut*, 248
Virgin's tree, 213; *woodcut*, 215

Waggon vaulting, 216
Wakf, or religious trusts department, 50, 106, 118

Walls of Cairo, 6-7
Watchmen, *woodcut*, 141
Water-carrier, *woodcut*, 151
Water-engines, 236-40
Water system, 234-43
Watson, Major C. M., 18
Weddings, 160-167; *woodcut*, 161
Wefâ En-Nîl, 27
Wekâla (Okella, or Khân), 14; of Kâït Bey, 14, 54; *woodcut*, 54
Well in Citadel, 18; wayside, *woodcut*, 211; at village, 252
"White Wall," 223
Wife's rights to property, 162
William of Tripoli, 86
Windows of a house, 126, 130, 132; *woodcut*, 85; of mosques, 42, 60
Wine in the Middle Ages, 94, 153-6, 309; of Nuahirwân, 95, 153
Wits at court, 154
Women, daily life, 140; polygamy and concubinage, 137; divorce, 137; Greek mistresses, 44; peasants, 279-81; preponderance of women in Hell, 144; rights to property, 162; Mohammedan contempt for the sex, 145; *woodcut*, 253
Wood, Sir Evelyn, 298
Wood-carving in Coptic churches, 217, 219
Wood-work, carved and panelled, 58, 132; *woodcuts*, 109, 111, 133
Working classes in Egypt, 119-20

YASHMAK, 142
Yezid, Khalif, 144
Yule, Col. Sir H., 84

ZEMZEM water, 170
Zeyneb, Sitta, 175
Zikrs, 170, 175, 200
Zimâmdâr, 88
Zodiac, 309, 312
Zuheyr, Bahâ-ed-dîn, poet, 26, 94, 95
Zunnâry, 89
Zuweyla [*Bab*]

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